

The
BOOK OF BETTY BARBER
MAGGIE BROWNE



ILLUSTRATED BY
ARTHUR RACKHAM



Class PZ 8 .L

Book B 17

PRESENTED BY

B

THE BOOK OF
BETTY BARBER



"THIRTEEN-FOURTEENTHS BOWED HIS VERY BEST BOW."

Andrewes, Margaret (Hamer)

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

BY
MAGGIE BROWNE

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
ARTHUR RACKHAM, A.R.W.S.



BOSTON
RICHARD G. BADGER
THE GORHAM PRESS

1914

15-13474

P28
A 562
130

Gin
Publisher
JUN 17 1915



PRINTED AT
THE BALLANTYNE PRESS
LONDON ENGLAND

m.v.g. fe. 23-12.
New R.L. 374 45

CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I. THE FINDING OF THE BOOK	I
II. THE B. OF A C. OF A P. G.	12
III. MAJOR C GOES A-VISITING	23
IV. "TIME—DECORATOR"	34
V. "A FAIR LITTLE GIRL SAT UNDER A TREE"	47
VI. WHAT THE WHITE OWL KNEW	61
VII. A BOX OF OINTMENT	72
VIII. IN SUM LAND	82
IX. THE BOX CHASE	93
X. THE COURT OF THE PANJANDRUM	103
XI. FATHER WILLIAM'S STORY	112
XII. THE END OF THE BOOK	121

LIST OF COLOURED PLATES

“Thirteen-Fourteenths bowed his very best bow”	<i>Frontispiece</i>	
“‘A bit of a chit of a pink girl!’ shouted the fairies in chorus”	<i>To face page</i>	18
“Helping a girl who seemed scarcely able to walk”	„	74
“She found herself dragged backwards right through the hedge”	„	106
“‘I met a most friendly, obliging Owl’”	„	114
“They joined hands”	„	128

LIST OF BLACK-AND-WHITE ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
"Lucy jumped up from the ground with a cry"	7
"All three tumbled to the ground and rolled over and over"	15
"He was pinched, poked, beaten, and pushed down the steps"	29
"The men were still busy unloading the cart"	37
"Father Time's men and boys were running up the road to meet the Sharps and Flats"	43
Jill and Bopeep	51
"The Pussy Cat caught hold of her, the Owl jumped on her shoulder"	57
"Half-Term found himself tumbling down"	67
"They began to play a game of catch with the box"	79
"Showers of little pieces were thrown up in the air"	87
"Then forward again!' shouted Sois"	95
"Began jumping up and down"	125

GOOD-NIGHT AND GOOD-MORNING

A FAIR little girl sat under a tree,
Sewing as long as her eyes could see ;
Then smoothed her work, and folded it right,
And said, "Dear Work ! Good-night ! Good-night !"

Such a number of rooks came over her head,
Crying, "Caw ! caw !" on their way to bed ;
She said, as she watched their curious flight,
"Little black things ! Good-night ! Good-night !"

The horses neighed, and the oxen lowed :
The sheep's "Bleat ! bleat !" came over the road :
All seeming to say, with a quiet delight,
"Good little Girl ! Good-night ! Good-night !"

She did not say to the Sun, "Good-night !" ;
Though she saw him there, like a ball of light ;
For she knew he had God's time to keep
All over the world, and never could sleep.

The tall, pink fox-glove bowed his head—
The violets curtsied, and went to bed ;
And good little Lucy tied up her hair,
And said, on her knees, her favourite prayer.

And while on her pillow she softly lay,
She knew nothing more till again it was day ;
And all things said to the beautiful Sun,
"Good-morning ! Good-morning ! our work is begun."

LORD HOUGHTON.

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

CHAPTER I

THE FINDING OF THE BOOK

"WHAT is it?" said the Major.

"I think it's a book," said Good little Lucy.

"Pull it out, and let us have a look at it," said Miss Crimson Lake.

And then the three pulled and tugged, scraped away dead leaves, pulled again, and at last, out of a hole at the foot of the hollow trunk of the tree came a book, quite small, rather old and torn, untidy inside and out, only a school exercise-book.

"H'm, don't think that is much of a find," said Miss Crimson Lake, "and look at my hands, I've made them so dirty." She was a dainty young lady, dressed in the pinkest of pink dresses, but her cheeks were even pinker than her dress.

"It may be a great treasure," said Lucy.

"It's rather a stupid book, I fancy," said the Major, "I don't see a note of music in it."

"Wait a minute, wait a minute," said Lucy, who had been turning over the pages, "I believe it is a very interesting book, and a sensible one too. Listen to this, 'All grown-up people are stupid.'"

"That sounds sensible enough," said Major C.

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

"Don't interrupt," said Miss Crimson Lake.

"I suppose I shall be stupid too when I grow up," read Lucy, "so I mean to write down in this book the things I like, then when I am grown up, I shall know what my children will like——"

"But who is writing it?" asked Miss Crimson Lake. "A child, of course, but is it a boy or girl?"

"Look if the book has a name," said Major C.

"None outside," said Lucy examining the cover.

"Then look inside," said Miss Crimson Lake.

"Ah, yes, here it is," said Lucy, "on the very first page, and there are two names. How I wish I had two!" and Lucy sighed a deep, deep sigh.

"Well, what does it say?" asked Miss Crimson Lake.

"Yes, what does it say?" said Major C.

"It says, 'This is the book of Betty Barber,'" said Lucy, "Betty Barber, what a beautiful name?"

"Hullo, Lucy, where is your work?" called a loud voice, as a boy dressed in black and white came running down one of the paths through the wood towards the tree. "Don't we all know that you are

'The fair little girl who sat under a tree,
Sewing as long as her eyes could see——'

"But you seem to forget that

'I've smoothed my work and folded it right,
And said, "Dear work, good-night, good-night!"'

this time," laughed Lucy.

"What have you got there?" asked the boy, and he snatched the book out of Lucy's hands.

"What a rude fellow!" whispered Miss Crimson Lake, "who is he?"

"Only a fraction," said Lucy. "Give me the book back, Thirteen-fourteenths."

THE FINDING OF THE BOOK

"A curious signature," murmured Major C, who had been staring at the newcomer's strange dress, which was covered with figures. His jacket was white, his knickerbockers black, a broad black sash was tied round his waist. Both jacket and knickerbockers seemed to be made of small pieces, and on each piece was worked a number. The jacket was covered with black figures, and the knickerbockers showed white figures all over them.

"Excuse me, sir," said the Major, "but might I ask, I don't quite understand—Thirteen-fourteenths. Fourteen what? Would you explain?"

"Give me the book, and I'll introduce you to the Major," said Lucy.

"Shan't give you the book," said the Fraction, taking no notice of the Major, for he loved to tease small girls.

"I'll reduce you," cried Lucy.

"You can't," shouted the Fraction.

"I'll turn you into decimals," said Lucy.

Without another word the Fraction dropped the book, and fell on his knees at Lucy's feet.

"Don't," he said, "don't. You know I want to be a whole number again so badly; I want to get my new dress."

"Never mind, I didn't mean it," said Lucy. "You know I wouldn't hurt you."

"You wouldn't hurt a rook, would you?" said the Fraction, "though a number did fly over your head crying, 'Caw, caw, caw,' on their way to bed."

"Hurt my rooks! No, indeed!" cried Lucy.

"But tell me who this old boy, I mean this old gentleman is," said the Fraction, picking himself up, "and I should be pleased to know the name of the charming young lady."

"Major C, this is Thirteen-fourteenths," said Lucy. "Major C is one of a large family much honoured in Music Land—the Scales—Major C Scale." Major C bowed politely, and, being a stately old gentleman, he could bow very politely.

"Thirteen-fourteenths, from Sum Land," said Lucy, "is an

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

old friend of mine, and a bit of a tease, but really a very well-meaning——”

“There, there, better soon,” said the Fraction. Then he whispered quickly, “Don’t forget the young lady in pink. Is she a friend of yours from Rhyme Land? Which is her piece of poetry?”

“So sorry,” said Lucy, “this is Miss Crimson Lake, from Paint Land—Thirteen-fourteenths.”

The Fraction made his very best bow, but Miss Crimson Lake, who had picked up the book and was turning over the leaves, did not trouble to curtsy; she only gave a slight nod, and murmured something about “a vulgar fraction, I think.”

“We were reading this book, you know,” said Lucy quickly, “the Book of Betty Barber.”

“Rather a stupid book,” said the Major, “a bit dull.”

“Oh, do you think so?” said Miss Crimson Lake, smiling. “There’s something about you on this page. Listen to this: ‘I think C Major is very dull.’ I suppose she means Major C,” and Miss Lake began to giggle.

“Hoity-toity,” said the Major, getting red in the face.

Miss Lake went on reading quickly, “‘I shall let my children play C Major sometimes with sharps and flats, sometimes without sharps and flats.’”

“Did ever any one——” began the Major.

“One for you, my friend,” said the Fraction, laughing.

“Absurd! Ridiculous! Pre-pos-ter-ous!” cried the Major, getting more and more angry every minute. “Sharps and flats, indeed! Betty Barber! Stuff and rubbish! Fiddlestick-ends!”

“And here’s something about me,” said Miss Crimson Lake, who was trying to hide her smiles in the book. “What a sensible child she is!”

“Sensible child!” shouted the Major. “Pre-pos-ter-ous child!” and he began marching round and round the tree.

Lucy ran and peeped over Miss Crimson Lake’s shoulder.

THE FINDING OF THE BOOK

"‘I shall let my children paint all day long,’" she read from the book.

Miss Crimson Lake was dimpling and smiling to herself. "What a bright, clever child!" she said. "How seldom one finds a child who really knows how beautiful I and my charming relatives are. I must show this book to Prussian Blue and Gamboge."

"Stuff and rubbish! Pre-pos-ter-ous!" shouted the Major.

"I believe she says something about you," said Miss Crimson Lake to Lucy.

"Something pleasant about ‘good little Lucy,’" said the Fraction, "and something unpleasant about me, I expect."

"I read the first few lines," said Miss Lake, "but I don't think they struck me as altogether flattering."

"Here is the page," said the Fraction. "I'll read it out: ‘As for pieces of poetry, I shall teach my children sense, not nonsense. I think “Good-night and Good Morning,” that piece about “Good little Lucy,” is nonsense, and there is too much of it; at least three too many verses. Who wants to know that

“The horses neighed and the oxen lowed,”

or that

“The sheep's bleat, bleat, came over the road,
All seeming to say with a quiet delight,
Good little girl, good-night! good-night!”

and whoever in this world saw

“A tall pink foxglove bow his head,”

or

“A violet curtsey and go to bed?”

It is rubbish. No piece of poetry ought to have more than three verses, and I, for one, am heartily sick of “Good Little Lucy.””

"I thought it was not quite pleasant," murmured Miss Crimson Lake.

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

Lucy sat down under the tree, and looked very much as if she were going to cry.

The Major stopped his march to stare at her.

"Hullo," he said, "what's the matter with you?"

"She says that I am nonsense, that I ought only to have three verses, and that she's sick of me," said Lucy faintly.

"Oh, she does, does she?" said Major C, "then that only shows she doesn't know anything about it."

"Indeed it does," said the Fraction, "sick of good little Lucy, and her rooks and horses and violets——"

"May I ask," interrupted Miss Crimson Lake, who began to think that she was forgotten, "may I ask if anybody spoke to you?"

The Fraction was about to answer angrily, but the Major stopped him.

"The fact of the matter is," he said, "this book of Betty Barber's is nonsense, and it should be torn to pieces."

"Hear, hear!" shouted the Fraction. "Tear it up, tear it up, I'll help."

He seized one cover, the Major grasped the other, and the Book of Betty Barber was nearly in two, when Lucy jumped up from the ground with a cry, and held up her hand.

"Don't," she said, "don't. You mustn't. She won't like the book torn up. She does not think it is nonsense, or she would not have hidden it so carefully in this tree. She will be sorry if it is torn up. Please don't tear it up."

Thirteen-fourteenths dropped his half of the cover, but the Major still held on to his.

"It is all stuff and rubbish," said the Major.

"It is nothing of the kind," said Miss Crimson Lake, "it is sound good sense."

"It is nonsense," said the Fraction, leaning forward to seize the cover again. "The proper place for that book is Nonsense Land."

"But don't tear it up," said Lucy, "please don't."



"LUCY JUMPED UP FROM THE GROUND WITH A CRY" (p. 6)

THE FINDING OF THE BOOK

"You shall not tear it up," said Miss Crimson Lake.

That would have decided the question, and the Book of Betty Barber would have been torn in bits, but at that moment from the branches of the tree overhead came peal after peal of laughter.

The Major dropped the book and looked inquiringly at the others.

"Bother," said Thirteen-fourteenths, "what do they want? They always make mischief, and do harm. I'm off, I can't stand them. Come along, all of you."

Thirteen-fourteenths bounded away, but none of the others followed him.

Lucy had taken a seat upon the book to protect it. Major C was smiling pleasantly at the three charming Fairies who were peeping through the branches and smiling back at him; and Miss Crimson Lake was too busy wondering who the new arrivals could be, to think of following Thirteen-fourteenths.

"Who are they?" she whispered to Lucy.

"How do you do, how do you do?" called one of the Fairies.

"Playing at Mulberry Bush?" called another.

"Let us join in the fun," called the third. "We love fun."

"Rather," said the first.

"Now then, look out everybody," called the second.

And the three Fairies tumbled out of the tree, one on the top of the other, knocking off Major C's hat, and pulling Miss Crimson Lake's pretty hair.

"Don't," said Miss Crimson Lake crossly.

"Now, my dear young lady," said one of the Fairies, "don't lose your temper, and don't get annoyed with one of your best friends. We are the Holiday Fairies. I'm Christmas, you must know, and these are my sisters, Easter and Summer."

The Three Fairies curtsied prettily, one after the other.

"If it were not for us," continued Christmas, "the children would not have much time for you."

"But I don't like my hair pulled," said Miss Crimson Lake.

"Only fun, my dear," said Summer.

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

"And fun, my love, is the best thing in the world," said Easter.

"The only thing in the world," said Christmas.

"We love fun," they shouted in chorus.

Then they began chasing one another round the tree, laughing all the time.

For a few moments the Major watched them quietly, then he could not keep still, and began playing too, and after a little time even Miss Crimson Lake smiled and began to think of joining in the fun. Suddenly all the Fairies stopped in front of Lucy.

"She's at it again," said Summer.

"Tiresome girl!" said Easter.

"Let us shake her," said Christmas.

In spite of all the noise and laughter, Lucy, still sitting on the book, was fast asleep.

"Leave her alone," said the Major. "Perhaps she's tired."

"She always does it," said Summer.

"Always," said Easter.

"Whenever we come near her she goes to sleep," said Christmas.

"We will shake the bothering thing," they cried.

But the Major placed himself in front of Lucy to protect her.

"You must leave her alone," he said. "She isn't quite happy to-day, she's been hurt."

"Broken leg, sprained ankle, bumps, bruises?" asked Christmas. "We are quite used to those, and we don't like them. For some reason or other if they occur too often the children get tired of us."

"No, it's her feelings that are hurt," said the Major. "The fact of the matter is, we found the Book of Betty Barber."

The Fairies interrupted him with shouts of laughter.

"Betty Barber! Capital girl!" said Easter.

"So fond of fun," said Christmas.

"Where's the book?" asked Summer.

"Well, really," said the Major looking round.

THE FINDING OF THE BOOK

"She's sitting on it," said Miss Crimson Lake, "but you must see it, it is such a sensible book."

"So pre-pos-ter-ous," fumed the Major.

The Fairies began to laugh again.

"Somebody else's feelings were hurt," said Christmas slily.

"We thought you didn't seem quite happy," said Easter.

"Let us see the book," said Summer.

"I can tell you all about it," said the Major. "You need not bother to look at it."

"You must and you shall see it," said Miss Crimson Lake. "I'll get it," and before the Major could stop her, she had shaken Lucy awake, tipped her over, and taken away the book.

"What do you want? What is the matter?" said Lucy sleepily. "Oh, the Holiday Fairies are here. I'm sorry, but they always make me feel sleepy, when they come all together." Lucy yawned, and her head began to nod again. Then she caught sight of the book in Miss Crimson Lake's hands, and at once she was wide awake.

"Don't let them tear up the little girl's book," she said.

"Tear it up?" said Summer. "Certainly not. We want to see it."

"If you are going to read it aloud," said the Major, "I'm going."

"You wait a minute or two," said Christmas. "Let us look at it. Perhaps you didn't understand it. I'm sure Betty Barber never meant to hurt any one's feelings."

"Sit down, sit down," said Easter. "We'll all sit down, then we can talk the matter over quietly; only some one must see that Lucy doesn't go to sleep."

"I'll do my best to keep awake," said Lucy.

"Very well then, are you ready," said Easter.

CHAPTER II

THE B. OF A C. OF A P. G.

MISS CRIMSON LAKE, Lucy, and Major C sat down side by side under the tree. At Easter's suggestion, Lucy, like the Dormouse at the Mad Hatter's tea party, was put in the middle, so that the other two might keep her awake.

"I shan't go to sleep if they will really settle down to read the book," said Lucy.

"We'll try to read it," said Christmas, laughing, "but as for settling down——"

"We never did such a thing in our lives," said Easter.

"It looks like an exercise-book," said Summer, "and we don't like lesson-books. Indeed, I'm not particularly fond of books of any kind."

"Well, let us make a beginning, at any rate," said Christmas. "If you'll excuse us, we'll climb into the branches of the tree. Then we can swing our legs, and we all find—don't we?" she said, turning to the others.

"We do," said Summer.

"That we can think so much better if we are able to swing our legs," said Christmas.

"We can," said Easter.

"Really, dear me!" said the Major politely, and he watched the fairies climb up into the tree.

"You don't think so?" asked Christmas. "Then, perhaps you have never tried it."

THE B. OF A C. OF A P. G.

"Never," said the Major.

"Won't you get on with the book?" said Lucy.

The fairies opened the book, looked inside, and dropped it to the ground with a scream, as if they were hurt.

"What's the matter?" said Miss Crimson Lake.

"Sums," said Christmas.

"Arithmetic," said Easter.

"Take it away, take it away," said Summer.

"There are some sums, I know," said Miss Crimson Lake, rising from her seat and picking up the book, "but you need not look at them. Try the other end of the book."

But it needed some persuasion to get any of the fairies to touch the book again.

However, after a little time Christmas was induced to hold it in her hands, and Easter and Summer peeped at it cautiously.

"This is the Book of Betty Barber," read Christmas.

Then they all began to smile, then to laugh quietly, then to shout with laughter, and then all three tumbled to the ground and rolled over and over.

"Precisely," said the Major, "they consider the book absurd."

"Not a bit of it," shouted Christmas, "it wasn't the book at all. I was thinking how awfully funny you looked playing at Mulberry Bush round the tree."

"And I was beginning to think," said Easter, "only Summer tickled me."

"You tickled me," said Summer.

"You both tickled me," said Christmas. The Major rose from the ground.

"It seems to me," he said, "that we are exceedingly unlikely——"

"All right, we beg pardon," said Christmas.

"We do," said Summer and Easter.

The Major sat down again very slowly.

"Let us all stand up," said Christmas, "perhaps we shall get on better if we stand."

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

"We should get on all right," said Summer, "if it didn't look so like a lesson-book."

"Never mind," said Easter, "open the book the writing end, not the sum end, and let us try."

And the three sisters really did try hard; but they could not keep still two minutes together, and something kept happening which made them laugh or tumble or play, or do anything but keep their eyes on the book. The Major began to get very much annoyed, and Miss Crimson Lake was pouting. Lucy did nothing but yawn and gape and rub her eyes, she was so desperately sleepy.

At last the Major rose once more from the ground. He said never a word, but he bowed to each fairy, to Lucy, and Miss Crimson Lake, and was about to walk away, when a shower of acorns, stones, and twigs came tumbling on his head.

"Dear me, dear me, a sudden storm!" said the Major.

"What is it?" said Miss Crimson Lake, looking rather alarmed.

"Bother," said Christmas.

"Brother, you mean," said Easter.

"And he always upsets everything," said Summer.

"I rather like him," said Lucy. "It's the boy Half-term Holiday," she whispered to Major C, "the others think he is a nuisance; but he never makes me feel sleepy, he's so energetic and jolly."

"How's everybody?" called a boy's voice, and Half-term came tumbling out of the tree, turned a somersault in the air, and dropped neatly on his feet.

"Hullo, here's a book," said the boy, "a lesson-book too. No, it isn't. Well, I never!" And down sat the boy under the tree, and began to read the book as hard as he could.

"Isn't he queer?" whispered Christmas. "Last time I saw him—and that's some time ago, for nobody sees him very often—but last time I saw him he told me he hated books. He said the only thing he cared to do was to play cricket all day long."



“ALL THREE TUMBLED TO THE GROUND AND ROLLED OVER AND OVER” (p. 13)

THE B. OF A C. OF A P. G.

"You never know what he'll do," said Easter.

"Well, never mind, he won't put that book down until he has read every page of it," said Summer, "and then we'll make him tell us about it, so that we shall be saved the trouble of trying to read it."

Half-term never smiled, never spoke, only moved to turn the pages over.

"He doesn't think it is nonsense," said Miss Crimson Lake.

"You don't know what he thinks," said Lucy.

"Wait until he has finished," said the Major, "he won't be very long."

The three sisters were playing with one another, from time to time trying to tease and disturb their brother; but he only waved them away, and went on reading the book.

Nothing moved him until he had finished. Then he jumped up and looked about him.

"Well!" said the Major.

"What do you think of it?" said Miss Crimson Lake.

"I believe I could get to the top of that tree if I tried again," said Half-term thoughtfully, "though it certainly is the very, very tallest tree I ever saw."

"Hold him, don't let him begin. If he once touches the tree, we shall hear no more of the book," cried Christmas.

"Stop him, hold him!" shouted Easter.

The Major stepped forward, placed himself in front of the boy, and bowed low.

At once the boy began examining him carefully from head to foot.

"Major C, I believe," he said. "Now, I suppose you come from Music Land, Major C Scale?"

The Major smiled and bowed most amiably.

"And you have a great many relatives, I believe," said Half-term.

The Major bowed again.

"Then do *you* find it very dull without any Sharps or Flats?"

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

asked Half-term. "There are those who seem to think you may find it dull."

"Well, as a matter of fact," said the Major, "I never tried——"

"Oh," said Half-term, "if I were you I think I should try. Now, I find it a good plan to try everything."

"I never tried to get into three verses," said Lucy. "Perhaps Betty Barber would not be sick of me if I only had three verses."

"Try it," said Half-term, "it would be a most interesting experiment. Try it, will you, to please me?"

Lucy nodded. "I must try," she said, "I must do something."

"Thank you so much," said Half-term. "Now, let me see, what was I going to do? I know, get to the tip-top of this very tall tree. Good."

"One moment," said Miss Crimson Lake, smiling sweetly. "One moment."

"The tip-top of the tree," said Half-term, examining the tree carefully. "Yes, this is certainly the best side to attack. I never saw such a tall tree. I can't even see the top. Still, there must be one."

"Mr. Half-term, I want to speak to you," said Miss Crimson Lake.

But the boy would not listen to her, his thoughts were entirely occupied with the tree, and though she touched his arm he shook her off almost rudely, and set to work to climb.

Miss Crimson Lake was very much annoyed; but Easter, Summer, and Christmas began to laugh.

"He won't stop for you," shouted Christmas.

"He's horribly energetic," said Summer.

"He does everything as hard as he can," said Easter.

"A very rude fellow!" said Miss Crimson Lake, frowning crossly.

"He's nothing of the kind," said Christmas indignantly.

"He's a jolly fellow," said Easter.



“‘A BIT OF A CHIT OF A PINK GIRL!’ SHOUTED THE FAIRIES IN CHORUS.”

THE B. OF A C. OF A P. G.

"He's a rude fellow, and a perfect nuisance," said Miss Crimson Lake, "you said he was a bother, you said he upset everything."

"Oh, well, we may say anything we like about him," said Christmas, "he's our brother. That's different. But we won't hear him abused by a bit of a chit of a pink girl."

"What?" shrieked Miss Crimson Lake.

"A bit of a chit of a pink girl!" shouted the fairies in chorus.

"Lucy, Major," screamed Miss Crimson Lake, "do you hear them? They called me a——Oh! Oh! Oh!"

Miss Crimson Lake waved her arms and threw herself down on the ground in her excitement. But though she almost sat down on the Major, he only moved out of the way, and did not speak to her. He was lost in thought.

Lucy, too, paid no attention to Miss Crimson Lake. Lucy had buried her face in her hands, and was sitting in a heap on the ground. She did not seem to hear Miss Crimson Lake's screams.

The fairies were delighted. They joined hands, and danced round and round in a circle, calling at the top of their voices, "A bit of a chit of a pink girl!"

When Miss Crimson Lake found that nobody was troubling about her, she picked herself up from the ground, stopped screaming, and walked away.

"She's a silly young thing," said Christmas.

"So stuck up and conceited," said Summer.

"Hullo! Hullo!" shouted a voice.

"Who is it?" asked Summer.

"Half-term, of course," said Christmas, "He's up the tree."

"Hullo! Hullo!" shouted Half-term again. "Come up, come up. It's fine up here. I can see Paint Land, Music Land, Rhyme Land, Sum Land, Nonsense Land, ever so far. Come up, come up."

"Don't think we will," said Christmas.

"No, thank you," called Summer.

"You come down," shouted Easter.

"All right, I'm coming," called Half-term.

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

"Now," said Christmas, "we'll tell him what the B. of a C. of a P. G. said."

"And we'll make him think of a way to pay her out," said Easter.

"Here I am again," said Half-term, dropping to the ground. "Oh, you are here still," and he walked across to the Major. "I saw your street from the top of the tree. Twelve houses there are, I counted them. Is yours the first?"

But the Major did not move or speak.

"What is the matter with him?" asked Half-term.

"I don't know," said Christmas; "but, I say, Half-term, you know that bit of a chit of a pink girl who was here a few minutes since?"

Half-term shook his head. "Don't remember her," he said.

"Miss Crimson Lake, from Paint Land," said Easter. "She called you a rude fellow and a perfect nuisance."

"Paint Land," said Half-term; "I saw Paint Land from the top of the tree, and paint, paint—where did I see something about painting? I know, it was in that book, 'I shall let my children paint all day long.' I think I should like to try it. It would be fun to paint all day long, wouldn't it?"

"Yes," said Christmas eagerly, "let us all try it, and tell all the children to try it."

"A grand idea, I'm off," cried Half-term, and he bounded away. Christmas clapped her hands, and shouted "Hurrah!"

"What is the matter?" asked Easter.

"Don't you see, don't you see?" said Christmas. "He'll paint all day long, we'll persuade the children to paint all day long, and then we'll see how our young friend——"

"The B. of a C. of a P. G.," cried Easter.

"Likes it," said Christmas.

"We'll pay her out," said Summer.

"We will," said Easter.

The three sisters ran after their brother, laughing and shouting "Hurrah!"

THE B. OF A C. OF A P. G.

All the time, through all the noise, Lucy and Major C never moved.

For a little while all was quiet, and when the Fraction came strolling through the wood, to see if the Holiday Fairies had gone, he found the two still sitting under the tree.

He spoke to them, he touched them—they took no notice of him.

“What shall I do?” he said. “I must rouse them somehow.”

He picked up a bit of a stick, and poked first the Major with it, then Lucy; but still they did not move. Then his eyes fell on the Book of Betty Barber, lying on the ground where Half-term had left it.

“I’ll try that,” he said, and he turned over the leaves quickly.

“‘I think C Major is very dull,’” he read out of the book.

The Major jumped up, straightened himself, saluted, and began to speak quickly. “He shall be dull no longer,” he said. “I will inquire into the matter. I will return to Music Land, visit my relations, Major D and E, and F and G, and consult Minora, my ward. I will find out everything about these Sharps and Flats. Excuse me,” he said, bowing to Thirteen-fourteenths, “I must leave you. I have important business on hand. Attention! Quick march! Forward!” And the Major marched away.

“Now, what is he talking about?” said Thirteen-fourteenths. “He’s going back to do something in Music Land, that’s pretty clear; but what he is going to do is not quite so clear. Anyway, I’ve roused him. I’d better try the book on the lady now.”

Once more he turned over the pages.

“‘No piece of poetry ought to have more than three verses,’” he read. “‘I, for one, am heartily sick of “Good Little Lucy.”’”

Lucy rubbed her eyes, and stared up at the Fraction.

“I *will* try,” she said; “I never thought of trying until Half-term suggested it. I will try to get into three verses; then perhaps the boys and girls won’t be sick of me.”

“Oh, it’s Half-term’s been putting these ideas into your head,

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

is it?" said Thirteen-fourteenths. "I know him, a most energetic young man. Tell me what are you going to do?"

"I am going home," said Lucy. "I shall have so much to cut out to get into three verses." And Lucy walked away.

"Well, well," said Thirteen-fourteenths, "we can only hope they'll be better soon. Somehow I can't help thinking—Hullo, I must be careful, or I shall be lost in thought, too. It is this book, of course," and he dropped the book promptly and prepared to march away. Then he stopped, stooped down and picked it up again.

"I wonder what I had better do with it," he said. "I don't know where it came from, but I don't think I'll leave it lying about. It seems to upset every one, and make them quarrel. I know, I'll hide it somewhere near this tree. Why, I do believe the trunk is hollow. I'll put it inside the trunk."

And having climbed into the branches, and dropped the book inside the hollow trunk of the tree, he marched away, feeling very pleased with himself, and thinking himself very clever; never guessing that he had put the book back exactly where Betty Barber, its owner, had hidden it a short time before.

CHAPTER III

MAJOR C GOES A-VISITING

THE Major reached home much troubled in his mind. For the first time in his life he really looked at the houses which stood so close to his own.

There were twelve houses in one street—seven on one side, five on the other. Twelve narrow houses, for there were no rooms in them, only two long flights of stairs in each house.

The Major had never been inside any house but his own. The children kept him so busy going up and down his own flights of stairs, that when he had any spare time he was glad to go right away from them.

Now he looked up and down the street curiously. He examined his own house carefully; then he compared it with Major G's, the house next door. They were very much alike. Major G had more steps in front of his doors, and Major G had a door-plate—a door-plate with queer lines on it. Major C marched up the steps to look at the door-plate more closely. There were four lines on it, one pair crossing the other pair.

"Seems as if he wanted to play noughts and crosses all the time," said Major C, as he went down the steps again. He looked at the house next door but one. Major D had a door-plate with more lines on it. Major C examined one house after the other. Every house had a door-plate, only his was without.

As he walked to his own house he seemed to hear Minora's voice, "I wish we had a door-plate. Why haven't we a door-plate?"

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

Minora, the Major's ward, lived with the Major, and Minora was not one of the happiest and most cheerful persons in the world. She was supposed to be very much afraid of her guardian, but she wasn't a bit; and, though she had a back staircase of her own, she was very often to be found on the Major's, for she liked some one to talk to and grumble at. She tried sometimes to stir him up and make him discontented too; but that was not easy to do, for before he had seen the Book of Betty Barber, he was a very contented, easy-going old gentleman.

When he opened the front door, however, Minora saw that something was wrong.

He sank down on the first staircase and began.

"Minora," said the Major, "I want to consult you. Take a seat and listen to me. Do you know the Sharps?"

"Well," said Minora, dismally, "and a fine bother they are."

"Do you know the Flats?" asked the Major.

"No, I don't know anything about flats," said Minora decidedly, "I prefer a whole house myself, and I'm quite certain a flat would never suit you. No staircase at all, and you with your passion for going up and down. No, if you want to make a change, and very desirable it is, too, that you should make some change——"

"Minora," said the Major, "you are labouring under a misapprehension. I did not say *a* flat, I said *the* Flats, the family of Flats."

"Oh, they live over the way," said Minora. "I believe there is more than one family, and each house has a door-plate. Now, don't you think we might have a door-plate?"

"Minora," said the Major, "we'll see about that door-plate by-and-by. At the present moment I wish to talk to you about the Flats and the Sharps. I am thinking of paying a few visits to my relatives."

"And about time, too," said Minora. "I shall begin to enjoy myself at last. How often have I tried to persuade you to go about a bit! It would do you good, and it would do me good."

"I must find out about these Sharps and Flats," said the Major.

MAJOR C GOES A-VISITING

"I myself think my house is very charming, very comfortable. The stairs are so clean, so white, so even."

"And so dull," said Minora. "I never saw a duller house."

"There are those who seem to think the house dull," said the Major. "Minora, come along. We will start at once and visit these Sharps and Flats."

The Major opened the door, and stepped outside briskly. Minora followed him, looking more cheerful than she had ever done in her life. Once in the street, however, the poor old Major looked quite bewildered. Minora was quite equal to the occasion.

"We'll go and call on the Flats first," she said, taking his arm. "Come across the road. We'll look at the door-plates and go into the house which has most of those quaint-looking sixes on the plate."

"Sixes on the plate?" murmured the Major. "Oh, I see, that door-plate has no cross-lines on it."

"Of course not," said Minora, "lines mean Sharps. Even I know that, and troublesome things Sharps are. Why, sometimes one of my Sharps——" then she hesitated and looked at the Major, "but I daresay you don't notice, you never come up my staircase, do you?"

The Major was not listening to her. Minora talked so much that the Major rarely listened to her.

"Three sixes," he said, "then that means three Flats."

"We will go to the last house of all," said Minora. "I believe there are five Flats living there."

"My dear Minora," said the Major, "how uncomfortably crowded the stairs must be. The Major, his ward, and five Flats! Why, they will scarcely be able to move."

"Let us come and see how they manage," said Minora, and she boldly tapped at the door.

A military gentleman opened it. He saluted promptly, and the Major bowed politely; but Minora, the doleful, dismal, grumbling Minora, began to giggle.

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

"My ward, Minora," said the Major, staring in astonishment at that young lady, and giving her arm a shake. "I am Major C."

"Major D Flat, at your service," said the owner of the house.

"Look at his face," whispered Minora, as Major D Flat stepped aside to allow the strangers to enter. "He's forgotten to wash it."

And, indeed, the Major's face was quite black.

"Come in, come in," he said cheerfully. "I am pleased to see you. Can I do anything for you?"

Major C looked at the staircase. It was nearly as black as its owner's face.

"I wanted——" he began.

"Well, you must know," interrupted Minora, "he has very sensibly come to the conclusion that his own staircase is a bit dull."

"Minora, be quiet," said Major C.

"Would you walk up my staircase?" said the black-faced Major pleasantly.

Major C put one foot on the first step, up sprang a little black head. The Major stepped back in astonishment, right on the top of Minora, and down they tumbled together.

"Only one of my Flats," said Major D Flat, "I'm so sorry; I hope you are not hurt."

"Not much," said Major C politely. "Might we perhaps sit on your third step?"

Major D Flat said, "Certainly." But to reach the third step, which looked so white and inviting, they had to pass the second, and as soon as Major C's foot touched it, up sprang a second little black head, and once more down slipped the Major. He rolled over and over, and once more arrived on the top of Minora, knocking her right down.

"I'm going home," said Minora, "I'm sorry I came, you've hurt me."

MAJOR C GOES A-VISITING

"I really think," said Major C, rubbing his arms and legs, "we won't go further."

"Just as you please," said Major D Flat haughtily, "You don't seem accustomed to Flats."

"Indeed, he doesn't," called a small voice.

"I believe he's broken my toe," called another.

"Let's pelt him," called other voices.

It seemed to the Major as if black heads appeared on every step.

Major D Flat opened the door hastily. "I think, if you don't mind," he said, "you had better go." And he almost pushed Minora and Major C out of the door and down the steps.

"Well, well, well," said Major C, "if this is visiting, and if those are Flats——"

"I'm going home," said Minora. "It is all your fault. You would spoil anything. Anybody would have thought that, whatever you couldn't do, at least you ought to be able, after all the practice you've had, to walk upstairs."

"Minora," said Major C, "go home."

And Minora went rather quickly.

The Major stood still, thinking.

"I begin to think," he said, "that Betty Barber's fondness for the Sharps and Flats is a great mistake. But I have not yet visited the Sharps, perhaps that was an unfortunate beginning. I will try again." And Major C marched across to the other side of the road. The door of the last house stood ajar, and the Major walked up the steps and tapped gently.

There was no answer, so the Major peeped in. The staircase looked every bit as black as the one on the opposite side of the road, and the Major felt very much inclined to turn round and go away; but he heard footsteps on the stairs, so he pulled himself together and coughed twice. At once the door was flung wide open; black heads appeared on the staircase, and a black maiden stood before him.

"You want to see Major F Sharp," said the black maiden.

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

"Well, he's out, and if you take my advice you won't wait until he comes home."

"You won't indeed," shouted the little black Sharps.

"He's never in a good temper," said the black maiden.

"Never, never, never," screamed the Sharps.

"We're none of us in good tempers in this house," said the maiden, "and it is the children's fault. They tumble up and down this staircase."

"Step on your toes," shouted one of the Sharps.

"And fingers," screamed another.

"All day long," said the black maiden, "the nasty little things."

"The children are dear little things," said the Major indignantly. "If you hadn't so many of these black things about to crowd your staircase they wouldn't tumble up it. If you will allow me to give you a bit of advice——"

"We won't," screamed the Sharps.

"They won't," said the maiden. "Sometimes they won't even allow me to speak."

"She has to be quiet sometimes," said one of the Sharps.

"And you are Sharps?" said the Major.

"We are indeed," shouted the Sharps.

"Then you are every bit as bad as Flats," said the Major.

"I wonder your master can stand you. No wonder his temper is bad!"

But his voice was drowned in a chorus of shouts and screams and yells.

"Bite him, pelt him, turn him out!"

In a moment Major C was surrounded. He was pinched, poked, beaten, and pushed down the steps, and the Sharps were following him out into the street, when there was a cry from the black maiden of "He's coming, I can see him." In a moment every Sharp ran inside the house, the black maiden vanished, and the door was shut.

Major C rubbed himself, shook himself, and tried to remember where he was and what had happened to him.



"HE WAS PINCHED, POKED, BEATEN, AND PUSHED DOWN THE STEPS" (p. 28)

MAJOR C GOES A-VISITING

Then he felt himself touched on the shoulder, and turning round saw the master of the house, Major F Sharp.

"I hope my ward and my little Sharps were polite to you," he said. "They are rather rough sometimes, and I have to scold them. The fact of the matter is, they have much to try their tempers, all the children are so very stupid. They tumble about on our staircase in the most careless way."

"Stupid," gasped Major C, "Stupid?"

"So very stupid," said Major F Sharp.

"I'm going home," said Major C, "I can't talk to you; you make me so angry. Did you really mean to say the children are stupid? Why, the children are dear little things. It is you who are stupid, to have such a crowded staircase."

"Come home, come home," whispered a voice. It was Minora, and she took Major C's arm.

"And you go home," she said, turning on Major F Sharp, "and scold those Sharps of yours. Try to teach them how to behave. I'll have them punished."

"Thank you," said Major F Sharp, "I'll trouble you not to interfere with my household."

"Come away," said the Major, who was feeling very bruised, very sore, and very depressed.

"It is a shame," said Minora. "Did they hurt you really?"

"Why were they so angry?" said the Major.

"It was those Flats over the way," said Minora, "didn't you see them?"

"See what?" said the Major.

"I was going home," said Minora, "and I happened to turn round. I saw the Flats at the end house making signs to the Sharps, and one of them slipped across to the side door."

"I didn't see him," said the Major.

"You were busy," said Minora, "and he was very careful not to let you see him."

"But why were the Flats angry with me?" asked the Major, "why should they want to pelt me?"

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

"You walked on their toes, and you tumbled over them and scolded them," said Minora, "and, if you'll excuse my mentioning it—well—you are heavy."

"Poor Minora," said the Major. "He tumbles over her and hurts her, and she thinks his house is dull; but she comes to help him when he is in trouble."

"Of course," said Minora. "I can't help grumbling and groaning, that's the way I'm made; but I'd help you any way I could any time, Major dear."

"Well, I've quite made up my mind about one thing," said the Major, "I'll never have a Sharp or a Flat on my staircase. Whatever Betty Barber may say, I'll have nothing to do with them."

"They certainly were very rude and disagreeable this morning," said Minora, "but sometimes they are quite pleasant. I have two."

"Then keep them out of my way," said the Major.

"Go and have a rest," said Minora, for the Major spoke quite angrily, "you'll feel better presently."

"I'll walk up and down my own clean white staircase," he said, "that will make me feel better."

And Minora heard him tramping up and down all that day. She did not go near him, but left him alone to get rested and forget his troubles.

"It was a pity," she said as she walked up her own staircase. "He began badly by hurting their feelings, and their toes, and their fingers; and they ended by hurting his feelings and his toes. He wouldn't have minded his toes, but his feelings are serious, and when any one abuses the children his feelings are very much hurt."

She found her own two Sharps on the way down her own staircase, and told them all about it.

"His staircase must be very dull," said one of the Sharps, "I find this one dull sometimes, and have to run out and get a change."

"I stop at home," said the other. "I'm always comfortable; but I must say I shouldn't be comfortable on Major C's staircase."

MAJOR C GOES A-VISITING

"You'd better keep out of his way," said Minora, "He'll never have a Sharp or a Flat on his staircase now. I don't know what's to be done. If Betty Barber thinks his staircase is dull, other children may think so too, and may keep away, and without the children he will never be happy."

"He'll do something, if he thinks the children would like it," said one of the Sharps.

"Of course he will," said the other, "he's so fond of the children."

"I must think about it," said Minora, "perhaps I shall think of some plan."

"You'll think of something," said the two Sharps in chorus.

"He's not much quieter yet," said Minora, "I can still hear him tramping up and down stairs, murmuring 'Preposterous! Betty Barber! Sharps! Flats!' What shall I do? I know, I'll go and ask—of course I will, he's sure to think of something. I'll go this very minute."

"Where are you going, Minora?" asked one of the Sharps.

"Let me come, too," called the other.

Minora did not answer, and the side door banged.

CHAPTER IV

"TIME—DECORATOR"

UP the staircase, down the staircase, tramp, tramp, tramp. Major C was beginning to feel better. He stopped shouting, and started thinking instead. The longer he thought about it, the more determined he became never to allow a Flat or a Sharp on his beautiful, clean white staircase. Yet something must be done.

Minora thought his house dull, Betty Barber thought he was dull, perhaps other children would think him dull, too.

The Major looked up and down his staircase and sighed. Then he heard sounds of shouting outside the house. He walked to the window and looked out.

Quite a number of men and boys were gathered round a cart, which was drawn up opposite the front gate.

Major C threw open the window wide.

"Now, then, look where you're throwing. One, two, three, are you ready? Here, catch these bars."

Major C could hear the shouts, as the men began to unload the cart and carry the things to his own side door. The Major could scarcely believe his eyes, and almost tumbled out of the window in his desire to get nearer. Were the things for Minora? Major C looked at the cart again more carefully.

On the side was painted in large letters: "Time—Decorator."

"Decorator?" said Major C very much puzzled. "Can Minora be thinking of decorating her staircase without consulting me?"

“TIME—DECORATOR ”

The Major hurried downstairs and threw the front door open.

The men were still busy unloading the cart, and all kinds of queer things were being carried to the Major's side door—curved black bars, straight black bars, round black balls, large numbers fastened one above the other—which Major C knew were time signatures—and big signboards with long names painted on them.

The Major coughed loudly. The men and boys were far too busy to notice him.

“May I ask——” he began.

The unloading of the cart went on steadily.

“Would you kindly tell me——” said the Major, trying again, and speaking more loudly.

He had made himself heard at last.

“The master will be here directly,” said a smart little black boy, who moved very quickly, and spoke very quickly.

“Excuse me,” said Major C, “but the master is here. I am the master, I am Major C.”

“That's all right,” said the small boy, “we were to bring the things to Major C's, and pile them up at his side door. It's all right, boys,” he shouted to the others. “He says he is Major C, so this is the right house. You see, we couldn't be quiet sure of the house,” he said, addressing Major C, “as you haven't a door-plate; but we'll soon put all that right for you.”

“Excuse me——” began Major C. Then he looked up the road, and saw Minora walking towards the house with a very old-looking gentleman, whose hair was very white, and whose beard was very long. Minora hastened up the steps to the Major.

“I am so sorry I couldn't get back before,” she said.

“Minora,” said the Major, “I think you ought to have told me you were thinking of getting your staircase decorated by this gentleman.”

“I'm very sorry,” said Minora, meekly.

“Never mind,” said the Major. “I will forgive you; but I should like to speak to the gentleman myself.”

“Of course,” said Minora, “but let me tell you first——”

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

"Fetch the gentleman, and let me speak to him," said the Major, so decidedly that Minora hopped down the steps without another word.

"He wants to speak to you himself," she whispered to the old gentleman, "Come up the steps."

"Mr. Time, I believe," said the Major.

"Father Time I am usually called, sir," said the old gentleman.

"I beg pardon, Father Time," said the Major. "May I ask you to step inside, Father Time? I was thinking perhaps you might be able to assist me——"

Minora opened her eyes very wide.

"To decorate my house," continued the Major. "I myself think it is quite satisfactory as it is; but there are those who consider it dull."

"I can promise you the most careful and prompt attention," said Father Time. "May I be permitted to view the premises? Then I will furnish you with plans of decoration, hoping that one may meet with your approval. Excuse me one moment," and he ran down the steps.

"I'm so glad," said Minora, "I'm so glad. I thought——"

"Never mind what you thought, Minora," said the Major stiffly.

"Here I am, at your service," said Father Time. "I have spoken to my people."

Major C waved his hand, and invited Father Time to enter.

"You will observe——" he began.

But Father Time hurried up the staircase, and before the Major had time to object he was down again.

"Pardon me," he said, "I am a very busy person. I am quite prepared to propose several schemes. What would you think of building up chords on each stair, and adding a bass?"

The Major frowned. "I should tumble over the cords," he said.

"You don't take to that scheme," said Father Time. "Very



"THE MEN WERE STILL BUSY UNLOADING THE CART" (p. 35)

“TIME—DECORATOR ”

well, then, we abandon it at once. I must strongly recommend you to try a signature. That seems an absolute necessity. Which kind do you prefer? Before you decide, I should very much like to give you some idea—of course, it can only be a rough one—of the general effect. Just one moment, and, needless to remark, when I say a moment I mean a moment.”

Once more he tripped down the steps and spoke to the men, sending one here, another there, and all his directions were quickly and silently obeyed.

“They were making such a noise before he spoke to them,” said Major C, “he certainly is a wonderful old gentleman.”

“And such a clever one, too,” said Minora. “He’ll make your staircase look grand.”

Father Time appeared at the front door once more, carrying a long wand in his hand.

“We will first try three Crotchets,” he said, and he waved his stick in the air.

Immediately all the men and boys placed themselves in a long line in the most orderly way.

“Three-four,” called Father Time.

Three smart boys, dressed all in black, stepped forward and bowed.

“Crotchets, you know,” said Father Time. “Now, do you prefer Legato or Staccato? Minim, fetch a slur, Semibreve, three dots please.”

A round-faced fat boy, so fat and round that he seemed to be all face and body without legs, rolled to the pile of things heaped up at the side door, picked up a curved black bar, rolled back again, and held the bar over the Crotchets.

“Are you ready?” called Father Time, waving his stick.

The Crotchets joined hands and glided smoothly over the ground.

“Legato,” explained Father Time. “Now, please, Staccato!”

The Crotchets each took a black ball, held it over his head, and jumped suddenly in the air.

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

"Now, if you have a Staccato Crotchet on each stair," said Father Time, "the house would be no longer dull."

"No," said Major C, "but I should have a great many Crotchets."

"And too many Crotchets in any house are not pleasant," said Minora.

"Really," began Father Time, looking quite annoyed. "Well, well, I must think of something else," he added quickly. "Perhaps you would like to try common time, and use Semibreves only, they are slow. Then, to avoid dullness, you might label each bar differently, one 'Presto,' one 'Andante.' That would give great—— Excuse me one moment." And Father Time put down his stick.

A messenger ran up the steps, whispered to Father Time, and ran down again.

"I'm very sorry," said the old gentleman, "but I shall have to leave you. There's a Russian gentleman wanting me at once. He is in difficulties ; but it's the last scene of his opera, so I shan't be very long. Will you be trying experiments with the Semibreves? Good-bye, I'll be back very quickly." And Father Time hurried away.

"He is a very busy person," said the Major.

"What a pity he had to go," said Minora.

"Now, then, come along," said the Semibreve, "we had better begin. What did he say?"

"Common time, I think," said Minora, who had picked up Father Time's wand, and was holding it in her hand.

"Then two of us can manage each bar," said the Semibreve. "Fetch some labels."

"I'll come and choose them," said Minora, and she ran down the steps.

The boys and men moved out of the way. Directly she spoke her orders were obeyed. Minora had never before felt so strong and cheerful, so capable of giving orders. She chose labels, she ordered them to be carried up to the Major, she

“TIME—DECORATOR”

decided for him which would be best, in point of fact she managed everything.

The Major looked rather disturbed and unhappy about it all, but Minora was thoroughly enjoying herself.

“Suppose we had two labels for each bar,” she said, “the children would think it great fun.”

“It would be very confusing,” said the Major; “but it is all confusing.”

“Oh, no,” said Minora. “Let me show you. I will be back in one minute,” she called to the men and boys. Then, putting Father Time’s wand down on the top step, she ran indoors and shut the front door.

“Now, watch me,” she said. “We will have two labels, ‘Andante’ and ‘Presto’—slowly and quickly they mean, you know—on the first flight of stairs. Then we should have to go slowly up the first two steps, and very quickly up the next two—Hullo! What is the matter outside?”

She threw the front door open and nearly tumbled over one of the Crotchets, who was standing on the top step waving Father Time’s wand in the air, shouting at the top of his voice, “Come on, come on, I won’t have Semibreves or Minims. I will have Semi-demi-semi-quavers, and see how the silly old man——”

Then he saw Minora and the Major.

“What are you doing?” said Minora.

“We are coming into the house,” cried the Crotchet. “Come on, come on,” he shouted to the others.

“You shan’t come in,” said Minora, and seizing Major C’s arm, she dragged him inside and banged the door.

He sank down on the first stair.

“What is the matter?” he said.

The Crotchet was hammering on the door, and all the others were shouting.

“Tell them to go away, Minora,” said the Major. “Tell them I will have nothing at all done to my house. Why, oh why, did you ever ask them to come?”

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

"They will batter the door down directly," said Minora. "I'll speak to them out of the window, if I can make them listen to me."

Minora ran downstairs, threw the window open wide, and looked down on the crowd.

They stopped battering at the door when they saw her, though they went on shouting as loudly as ever.

The Crotchet was still waving the wand in the air.

Minora tried to make herself heard, but it was useless.

"Is Father Time coming?" called the Major.

Minora did not answer. Minora was watching the wand waving backwards and forwards.

She shut the window, hid beneath it a couple of seconds, then opened the window suddenly. She stretched out her arm, grasped the stick firmly, and pulled it away from the Crotchet. Then she shut the window again, and ran down the steps to Major C, who was sitting with his head in his hands, looking white and old and worried.

"We shall never escape, Minora," said the Major, "they will batter the house down."

Minora laughed. She no longer felt a bit afraid.

"It's all right," she said. "Listen, they have stopped shouting. I know all about it now. Hold this wand."

The Major took the wand in his hand. It had a wonderful effect upon him. He pulled himself together, he sat up straight, then he rose and marched upstairs.

"I will speak to them myself," he said, "I will tell them to go away."

He opened the window and leant out; but the crowd had disappeared, only Father Time stood on the doorstep.

"There you are," said Father Time. "I'm sorry to trouble you, but I left my wand. Oh, thank you so much. I'll be back again directly. Hope you are getting on all right." And, taking the wand, the old man hurried away before the Major could say a word.



"FATHER TIME'S MEN AND BOYS WERE
RUNNING UP THE ROAD TO MEET
THE SHARPS AND FLATS" (p. 45)

“TIME—DECORATOR”

The Major stared after him, then he shut the window and hurried back to Minora.

“Dear, dear, what a pity!” said Minora. “I don’t know what we are to do without the wand. Why didn’t you tell Father Time?”

“Was it the wand that made me feel so strong?” asked the Major.

“Of course,” said Minora, “it’s a wonderful wand. There’s a knock at the door. Now what’s the matter? I hope they haven’t all come back again. I’ll peep, before I open the door.”

Minora ran to the window, peeped without being seen, and hurried down to the Major.

“Anybody there?” asked the Major.

“Anybody there!” said Minora. “They are all there, and, what is worse, I saw troops of Sharps and Flats collecting together up the road.”

“What shall we do? What shall we do? They will batter the house down!” cried the Major.

“They shan’t get inside,” said Minora.

“Oh, why did you ever bother about them?” wailed the Major. “Why did I ever think of altering my beautiful staircase? It’s all your fault, Minora.”

“We’d better get away as quickly as we can,” said Minora. “I’ll have another peep to see what is happening.”

“I won’t leave my house,” cried the Major, “they would destroy it.”

Minora peeped. Father Time’s men and boys had left the steps and were running up the road, talking and shouting, to meet the Sharps and Flats.

“Now is our chance,” said Minora, “if only I can get him out of the house, before they come back,” and she ran to the Major.

He was sitting on the stairs, saying very decidedly, “I will never leave my house, I will never alter my house.”

“Major,” said Minora, “you said it was all my fault; but it isn’t, it is Betty Barber’s fault. Come with me. Let us go

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

together and look for that book, which has brought you into all this trouble."

"We will," said the Major. "We will tear it up. Come along." And he jumped up quite briskly.

"We will go quickly too," said Minora, "we will prevent any other children reading the rubbish."

"But we must not let Lucy know that we have torn it up," said the Major.

The crowd in the road was busy shouting, each one trying to shout louder than every one else.

In order to punish the Major and Minora they were all determined to pull the house to pieces; but were too much occupied to notice the departure of the owner, though the Major saw them.

"I should like to speak to them," he said, "to tell them they must not touch my house."

"If we waste time," said Minora, anxious to get him away, "some other child will read the book. Besides, look, I believe I see Father Time with his wand. He will quiet them."

"Then come," said the Major, "we will go and look for the book. I know exactly where to find it."

CHAPTER V

"A FAIR LITTLE GIRL SAT UNDER A TREE"

THE tree was there—a very large, beautiful tree, too—and the work was there ; but Lucy was neither sitting under the tree nor "sewing as long as her eyes could see." She was walking up and down the garden, looking very serious and very solemn.

"Caw, caw," called the Rooks, who lived up in the tree.

Lucy made no answer.

"Caw, caw, caw !" called the Rooks very loudly.

Lucy looked up at them.

"I don't think I can cut you out," she said, "I love to see you fly over my head."

"Cut us out ! What is she talking about ?" said the Rooks.

"She said something to us about cutting," said the tall pink Foxglove.

"Oh, I've been cut out," said the Work, "it's quite all right !"

"Excuse me," said Lucy, waking up from her dream, "it isn't all right, it's all wrong."

"What is all wrong ? Tell us all about it," said the Violets, curtsying.

Lucy frowned. For the first time in her life she wished the Violets would not curtsy ; she wished they would dance a hornpipe or jump, do anything but curtsy. She felt quite sick and tired of seeing the Violets curtsy, and she could not help thinking that if she were sick of her own Violets it was not very surprising that Betty Barber was sick of her.

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

"I must cut some of them out," she said, "but I cannot make up my mind which it shall be."

"You won't cut me," shouted the Foxglove.

"Or us," called the Violets.

Lucy ran across to the tree, picked up her work, rolled it up into a tight, tight ball, and threw it on the ground.

"Well, I never did," said a girl who was peeping over the garden gate. "Here is quite a new story :

"A queer little girl stood under a tree,
Spoiling her work, so silly was she ;
She rolled it up small, and squeezed it up tight,
And said, ' Stupid work, good-night, good-night.' "

Lucy stamped her foot. "Be quiet, Mary," she said, "it is easy for you to laugh, you have only three verses."

"And quite enough, too," said Mary, walking through the gate, "quite as many as most children can get into their heads. I can't think how you manage with six, and you've so many things to look after, too—foxgloves, violets, rooks, horses and oxen. Why, I find it takes me all my time to keep one lamb in order."

"But I don't get on," said Lucy. "I don't get on at all with the children. They say that I am too long, and that they are sick of me."

"Too long, too long ! What rubbish," grumbled an old Spider, who was very busy close by Lucy's tree, making a most superior parlour for silly flies to walk into. "They'll say I'm too long next, I suppose. You haven't enough verses, that's what's the matter with you. You want more verses and more lines. It takes a great many lines to make a really good web."

"Cut out two or three verses," said Mary, taking no notice of the Spider.

"I've been trying to do it all the morning," said Lucy, "and I can't manage it. I love my flowers, and birds, and beasts, I can't leave one of them out."

"I won't leave a single verse out," growled the Spider.

“A FAIR LITTLE GIRL SAT UNDER A TREE”

“Well, then, in my humble opinion you are in a pretty fix,” said Mary. “Now, if I were you I would make up my mind to cut three verses out, and do it too. You would certainly be more popular. I haven’t said so before, because I didn’t want to hurt your feelings; but do you think you are quite as popular as you were? Have you noticed that our friends on the other side of the road, the Owl and the Pussy Cat, the Walrus——”

“I know nobody who lives on the other side of the road,” said Lucy, quickly. “I have nothing to do with nonsense.”

“But, my dear,” said Mary, “what if the children prefer nonsense?”

“My love,” said Lucy, very crossly, “you’ll say next they prefer nursery rhymes.”

“Well, don’t shout,” said Mary, “there are Jill and Bopeep outside the gate this minute. Don’t lose your temper, good little Lucy.”

“Good little Lucy losing her temper?” shouted Jill. “What can be the matter?”

“She says the children are sick of her because she has too many verses,” said Mary quickly.

“I think she might do with fewer,” said Jill, “Jack and I find three plenty.”

“If you will take my advice,” said Bopeep, “you’ll get rid of some of those verses. If you don’t, you will find you will gradually lose them. How many children, do you suppose, really know all my verses? I shudder to say it; but most of them I find know only my first verse, and some of them never even take the trouble to find out what happens to my sheep’s tails. I’m getting quite out of patience with the children.”

“Don’t do that,” said Lucy.

“You must not do that,” said Jill.

“Take a nap, and you’ll feel better,” said Mary.

“Really,” said Bopeep, “you seem to think I am always wanting to sleep in the day-time,” and she walked past the gate and up the road. The other three looked at one another, and Mary shrugged her shoulders.

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

"There, my dear," she said, "take warning. You see what will happen to you."

"She is nearly always cross," said Jill, sighing. "I must talk to her and try to soothe her," and Jill followed Bopeep up the road.

"I was cross, too, just now," said Lucy. "I can't bear to think the children are getting tired of me. What am I to do? Can't you help me?" She held out her hands beseechingly to Mary.

"It seems to me," said Mary, "that you have too much of the 'Good-night, good-night,' business. Couldn't you cut out some of that?"

"I might, of course," said Lucy doubtfully. "Anything would be better than leaving out my dear animals, or birds, or flowers."

"Caw, caw, caw," called the Rooks.

"Moo, moo," said the Oxen.

And the Horses neighed.

"I shouldn't be very sorry to leave out the Violets," said Lucy.

"Then, really, I don't see any reason why you should not be able to do it," said Mary.

"Beware, beware! In my youth——" called a voice.

The two girls looked up quickly.

A stout old gentleman was running up the road, calling as he ran.

"Who is it?" whispered Lucy.

"Hush!" said Mary. "Wait a minute, you will see. He will tell us about his youth, and ask us the way to the Land of Poetry."

The old gentleman was stopping at the gate.

"Good afternoon," he said, "I am sorry to trouble you, but do you happen to know if I am in Rhyme Land? I never can find out where I am. I used to live always in the beautiful Land of Poetry. Then one day I found myself in Nonsense Land, and since then I cannot find my way back home."



JILL AND BOPEEP (p. 49)

“ A FAIR LITTLE GIRL SAT UNDER A TREE ”

“ We are in Rhyme Land,” said Lucy. “ Come through the gate and you will be in Rhyme Land, too.”

The old gentleman sighed.

“ There’s my son, you know. He won’t come, he prefers Nonsense Land. Beware of Nonsense Land. But I’ll go and tell him about this gate. In my youth——”

And the old gentleman hurried up the lane, sighing and groaning and muttering.

“ You are old Father William,” said Mary. “ Poor Father William ! He is always trying to find his way to the Land of Poetry ; but he always, somehow, gets back to Nonsense Land.”

“ Then I must be careful not to get into Nonsense Land,” said Lucy.

“ Yes, you had better be very careful,” growled the Spider, who had finished his fine parlour. “ I only wish I had a few more lines.”

“ But the children,” said Lucy.

“ Moo—moo—moo,” said a Cow, poking its nose over the gate.

“ Thank you, pretty Cow,” said Mary. “ Now, the pretty Cow manages quite well with only three verses. Lucy, you must cut something out.”

“ I will,” said Lucy, and she ran to the gate to stroke the Cow’s forehead.

“ Silly things, silly things,” growled the Spider. “ Nearly as silly as flies.”

Mary followed Lucy to the gate.

“ Cut out the last two lines of the first verse,” said Mary, “ and three lines of the second verse.”

“ Yes,” said Lucy, as she opened the gate and stepped into the road.

“ Beware, beware ! In my youth——” shouted the voice of Father William, far away in the distance.

“ Then leave out the Violets, and tuck in the Foxglove,” said Mary.

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

"Let me see," said Lucy, walking slowly down hill :

'A fair little girl sat under a tree,
Sewing as long as her eyes could see ;
A number of rooks flew over her head,
The tall pink foxglove bowed his head.'

I seem to be getting on very well. I'm sure Betty Barber will be pleased."

"Who is Betty Barber, might I politely inquire?" demanded a very queer-looking brown Lobster, who was leaning over a stile on the other side of the lane.

Mary jumped and looked decidedly frightened.

"Lucy, my dear," she said, "we must be careful not to go too far."

"We must go on now," said Lucy. "Who is this gentleman?"

"If you will excuse me," said Mary, "I think I will go back. 'Tis the voice of the Lobster."

"How interesting!" said Lucy.

"Who is Betty Barber?" demanded the Lobster.

"I'll tell you all about her," said Lucy, and without waiting to see if Mary were following her, she climbed over the stile.

"Betty Barber wrote a book, you know," she explained, "and in it she said that no piece of poetry ought to have more than three verses."

"Don't see the use of verses myself," said the Lobster. "Come and talk to the Walrus about it, he has a good many verses."

"The Walrus?" said Lucy, "I never talked to a Walrus."

"Oh, he's quite all right," said the Lobster, "and we'll call on the Owl and the Pussy Cat, and a few others."

Lucy looked rather bewildered.

"The Owl and the Pussy Cat!" she said. "Am I in the Land of Poetry?"

"Ah, here comes the Walrus," said the Lobster. "I say, old friend," he went on, "there's one Betty Barber, who says that no piece of poetry ought to have more than three verses."

“A FAIR LITTLE GIRL SAT UNDER A TREE”

“I’ve been trying to get into three verses all the morning,” said Lucy, “and, do you know, I believe I’ve done it, too.”

“Three verses! Absurd!” cried the Walrus. “I have eighteen very useful verses. Of course I might——” and he looked round cautiously and lowered his voice, “I might leave out the Carpenter. He’s rather a bore is the Carpenter, and he is too fond of oysters.”

“The Walrus, the Carpenter, the Lobster!” said Lucy. “Oh, am I? Oh, I’m not—— Oh, don’t say——”

“What is the matter?” asked the Walrus.

“Am I in Rhyme Land?” asked Lucy.

“I don’t know what you are talking about,” said the Walrus, “but you come along. I want to talk to you about cutting out the Carpenter.”

Lucy followed him sadly.

“I must be in Nonsense Land,” she said. “Dear, dear! What shall I do? If only I hadn’t tried to get into three verses. It’s all Betty Barber’s fault. But I’ll get out somehow or other. I must and will, and then I’ll go to the tree, find the book, and tear—— Oh, what am I saying?”

“What are you mumbling and grumbling about?” said the Walrus. “Come along. You see the Carpenter is only on in six verses. I suppose—but you are not attending.”

“I’m sorry,” said Lucy, “but the fact of the matter is, I must go back. I’ve come too far.”

“Rubbish!” said the Walrus. “Here, some of you, come and help.”

“What is the matter?” asked the Lobster.

“Hullo, here’s a new arrival,” cried an Owl, hastening to meet them.

“Let me go,” said Lucy. “I must go.”

“Not until we’ve seen something of you,” cried the Clanglewangle, who was a very wonderful person.

“Are you in rhyme, my dear?” asked the Pussy Cat. “I’m sure I hope so.”

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

"I'm poetry," said Lucy faintly, for she was beginning to feel rather frightened.

"Of course," said the Lobster, "so are we all."

"Ah, you did get here then," said a Young Man. "Father William was talking about you. I must tell him you've come. It's capital fun, you know."

Lucy was almost crying.

"What shall I do? What shall I do?" she said.

"Let us hear something about you, now you are here," said the Walrus. "Who are you, anyway?"

"I'm good little Lucy," said Lucy. "Don't you know my piece, 'Good-night and Good-morning'? It begins—

‘A number of rooks sat under a tree,
Sewing as long as their eyes could see.’

No, that isn't right. I was going to cut that line out. No, I wasn't. Oh dear, oh dear! I must go back. Let me go, let me go."

"There, then, there!" said the Clanglewangle.

"But we won't let you go," said the Lobster.

"You must stay with us," said the Walrus.

"I won't," said Lucy, and she began to run.

But the Pussy Cat caught hold of her, the Owl jumped on her shoulder; the Walrus, the Lobster, and a number of queer beasts and fishes seized her and held her fast.

Lucy began to sob and cry aloud, and struggled to get free. The animals seemed rather scared.

"I'm going for a sail in my pea-green boat," said the Pussy Cat, as the Owl jumped down from Lucy's shoulder, and one after another the animals moved away.

Lucy, left alone, sat down on the ground, feeling as miserable as a good little girl can be. She was so full of her troubles that she did not notice that someone had come close to her, and was standing by her, looking down at her; and when she felt herself lightly touched on the shoulder she stopped crying instantly and jumped up from the ground.



"THE PUSSY CAT CAUGHT HOLD OF HER, THE
OWL JUMPED ON HER SHOULDER" (p. 56)

“A FAIR LITTLE GIRL SAT UNDER A TREE”

“What is the matter?” asked a very kind voice. “Have you, too, been trying to make apple pies out of cabbage leaves?”

Lucy examined the new-comer carefully, beginning with his boots and ending with the little button on top of his head, and Lucy bowed low. “You must be the Grand Panjandrum himself,” she said, and she bowed again and began to walk backwards.

“Let me help you, don’t go,” said the Grand Panjandrum, “I know she very imprudently married the barber, but don’t go.”

Lucy still continued to walk backwards. She knew that people always walked backwards before Royalty, and she felt sure that the Grand Panjandrum himself must be a person of very very great importance.

“What, no soap!” cried the Grand Panjandrum, and then quite suddenly he began to dance.

Lucy watched him a minute, then she called out, “Oh, the gunpowder!” and began to run as fast as ever she could, for she knew gunpowder was a thing with which no good little girl should play.

Though she soon began to puff and pant, she did not stop running until she found herself in front of a hedge, and she threw herself down beneath it.

“There’s no doubt about it,” she said sadly. “I’m in Nonsense Land. Well, I must get out. I must find that stile.” Then she stopped talking, and stared hard at a wood not very far away in the distance.

Something was happening at the top of one of the big trees. Something on it was moving, something white, or was it grey? It could not be a bird, it was too big. It was a signal. Lucy jumped to her feet, and looked about her for something to wave back. Someone up the tree was waving to her. Perhaps the tree was the one in the trunk of which the Book of Betty Barber was hidden. Perhaps it was Half-term or Thirteen-fourteenths signalling.

Lucy took off her pinafore and waved it in the air wildly.

Then she shouted, “Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!” and began to feel quite happy once more.

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

Someone knew where she was, someone would send help ; but first she would try very, very hard to help herself.

She waved once more ; then she put on her pinafore, pushed her hair out of her eyes, and began to search the hedge very carefully for some sign of a gap or stile.

CHAPTER VI

WHAT THE WHITE OWL KNEW

Now, in the hollow trunk of the tree in which Betty Barber's book was hidden, lived the very sleepest of all sleepy owls, and she hated being disturbed.

"Peace!" she said to her friend, Mrs. Bat, "there's not a bit of peace. Ever since Betty Barber hid that book in my tree, it's coming and going, it's fussing and fuming, it's raging and ramping, but never a bit of peace and quiet. I'm getting about tired of it. What with majors and fairies, and persons that are not even whole numbers, my tree is not my own."

"Get rid of the book," said Mrs. Bat sleepily, "peck it to pieces; it seems to be the cause of all the trouble. Ah! There's the dawn breaking. I thought so, that's why I am so sleepy—Day—day—Peck it to pieces, and you'll be able to sleep in peace."

"I only hope I shall get some sleep," said Mrs. Owl, and as the Bat flew away she settled herself down in her favourite corner, blinked and winked, and nodded, and was beginning to feel quite dosy and comfortable, when she heard a scratch, scratch, at the foot of her tree.

"At it again," sighed Mrs. Owl, "there's somebody after that book, and at this time of day, too."

Scratch, scratch, scrape, scrape!

"Well, I shan't move to see who it is," said Mrs. Owl, "if only there are not two of them, and if only they don't talk, I shall get a nap."

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

But the scratching and scraping and digging went on, and Mrs. Owl could not sleep.

"There is only one of them," she said, "I wonder which it is. The Major, the little girl, one of the fairies, perhaps. Yes, I almost think I will just hop down. Hullo! they are going away—I mean he is going away, or perhaps it is a she."

Mrs. Owl flew down from her comfortable corner and peeped out of the tree.

"Well, here's a pretty mess," she said, looking at the bark and twigs and moss scattered over the ground, "and nobody in sight, and, dear me, surely never," and she began scratching about in the moss, and searching inside the tree. "I do believe—well, now, isn't that a good thing! I really shall have some hope of getting a good sleep at last."

The Owl flew back to her perch, settled herself comfortably, and murmuring, "Well, who would have thought it! I call that a real blessing!" blinked herself to sleep.

The birds began to twitter, and the sun half opened one eye, the sleepy wood began to waken; but the Owl, tight asleep, heard nothing. A rabbit ran past the tree, and stared at the scraps of moss and bark, a robin picked up some of the loose pieces and carried them off, a large beetle tumbled over one of the twigs and grumbled at the mess.

Still Mrs. Owl slept on peacefully and happily, and dreamt she was having a most delightful supper of teeny tiny mice.

Then through the wood came the sound of footsteps, and Half-term walked slowly up to the tree, threw himself down beneath it, and yawned three great big yawns.

Such big yawns that Mrs. Owl's dream-supper disappeared, and Mrs. Owl opened one eye.

More footsteps sounded.

Half-term did not even trouble to look up to see who was coming, and when Thirteen-fourteenths threw himself on the ground on the other side of the tree he only yawned again.

Thirteen-fourteenths sighed, such a sigh that Mrs. Owl opened

WHAT THE WHITE OWL KNEW

the other eye, and began to blink at the daylight, which peeped in at her through the chinks of the tree.

A yawn from Half-term, a sigh from Thirteen-fourteenths, then three groans from each of them. Then they both rolled over and met face to face.

"Oh, it's you," said Half-term, "and you don't seem quite chirpy."

"You seem a bit depressed yourself," said Thirteen-fourteenths.

"I'm sick of it," said Half-term.

"So am I," said Thirteen-fourteenths.

"I'm tired of painting all the time," said Half-term.

"Not half as tired as I am of seeing those children paint all the time," said Thirteen-fourteenths. "Not a girl, not a boy, will do anything but paint, paint, paint. I can't think what has come over them all."

"Oh, well, you see, I thought it would be fun to paint all day long, so did Easter, so did Summer, so did dear old Christmas," said Half-term, "and we told the children so; but really, even I have had enough of it."

"Had enough of it!" said Thirteen-fourteenths, quite angrily. "So you are the cause of all this trouble. And, pray, did you think what would happen in Paint Land?"

Half-term picked himself up from the ground, and gave a long, low whistle.

"My young friend," said Half-term quite solemnly, "if you'll believe me, I never thought of that at all."

"Well, then, perhaps you may as well have a look and see," said Thirteen-fourteenths crossly, and he pointed to the tree.

"I will go and see," said Half-term, solemnly, "but first I should like to explain that if mischief has been done I am not the real cause of the mischief."

"What do you mean?" cried Thirteen-fourteenths. "You say you and your precious sisters told the children to paint all day long."

"So we did," said Half-term, "but only because I saw it in the book."

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

"Saw what, in what book?" said Thirteen-fourteenths, angrily jumping to his feet, for he thought Half-term was only making excuses.

"In the Book of Betty Barber," said Half-term. "Don't you remember, she says, 'I shall let my children paint all day long'?"

Thirteen-fourteenths began to think.

"Don't you know the Book of Betty Barber?" said Half-term. "Why, I read it through, and, by the way, I wonder how the Major is getting on with the Sharps and Flats, and good little Lucy, too. She promised to try to get into three verses."

"I wonder where Lucy is," said the Fraction. "I haven't seen her lately. I hope she hasn't got into Nonsense Land with her three verses. If she is there, she'll find it is far easier to get in than to get out."

"Dear, dear," said Half-term, "I'm afraid that book has caused a great deal of mischief. But I should like to find out about Paint Land. Let us climb the tree."

He jumped up from the ground, and began to climb the tree, and Thirteen-fourteenths followed him slowly.

"Mischief!" he said. "Mischief! He thinks the book has caused mischief, does he? If Lucy is lost in Nonsense Land—and she was talking nonsense the last time I saw her—I shall wish I had torn that book to pieces. Where did I put it? I know, in a hollow tree, and the trunk of this tree is hollow. I believe it was this very tree," and Thirteen-fourteenths nearly tumbled out of the tree in his excitement. "It is not too late," he cried. "I'll go down this minute and tear the book up."

But Half-term had reached the top of the tree, and he was calling loudly:

"Come up, come up. We must do something, we must get somebody to help. Look at Paint Land!"

Thirteen-fourteenths followed Half-term up to the top of the tree.

He looked across to Paint Land, and sighed.

"Yes," he said, "it is as I thought."

WHAT THE WHITE OWL KNEW

Though they could only see Paint Land in the distance beneath them, they could see enough to guess that terrible things were happening.

"The Paint Lakes have disappeared, the water in the wells is all used up," said Half-term. "I know there are no more brushes, for I used up the last this morning."

"The children are painting with sticks," said Thirteen-fourteenths, "and they are painting so carelessly—blue noses, red eyes, and green hair; and they are making such a mess, very soon all the soap in the world will be used up."

"Dear, dear, dear," said Half-term. "Let us go to Paint Land. I will fetch my sisters, they will help. The children must be stopped."

Half-term began to climb down the tree, as quickly as he had climbed up it.

Thirteen-fourteenths followed slowly.

"It has gone too far," he said, "the mischief is done; but we can destroy the book, and we will."

Half-term was nearly down, when he suddenly stopped, and held up a warning finger to Thirteen-fourteenths.

"There's somebody at the foot of the tree," he whispered, "two somebodies, and they are searching for something, I think."

"They are looking for the book," whispered Thirteen-fourteenths. "How do they know I hid it there? Can you see who they are?"

"I can see a girl," said Half-term, "but I never saw her before I don't know who she is."

"But there's Major C," cried Thirteen-fourteenths. "Hurry up, old boy, we must talk to him, he may know something about Lucy."

But in his eagerness to hurry Half-term slipped, there was a sound of crashing and cracking, and Half-term found himself tumbling down, down in the dark, inside the tree, instead of outside, to the great annoyance of Mrs. Owl, who flew at him and tried to strike him with her wings.

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

"Help ! Help !" he shouted.

Major C and Minora—for, of course, it was Minora—were frightened out of their wits.

"Come away, come away," said Minora, seizing the Major's arm, "there are fairies protecting it, it must be a magic book."

And the Major would have hurried away, had not Thirteen-fourteenths, who was recovering from his hasty descent of the tree, seized his arm.

"It's all right," he said. "We'll get you out, old chap," he called to Half-term, who was still calling for help, though he had managed to frighten Mrs. Owl away.

"Who is it?" said the Major.

"It's only Half-Term," said Thirteen-fourteenths, "and he has slipped inside the tree, instead of outside. All right, old chap," he called once more to Half-term. "I'll come and give you a hand."

"It's easy for you to say it's all right," shouted Half-term, "there's an old Owl inside here, and the stupid old thing keeps flapping her wings ; but I've caught her now. So come along and get me out."

"I think perhaps I had better help him out," said Thirteen-fourteenths, and he began to climb the trunk.

"Here, I say, Thirteen-fourteenths," shouted Half-term, "are you coming to help me out ? I want to show you the Owl, and she'll get away if I try to get out by myself."

"But make him search well first for the book," said Minora.

"Which book?" said Thirteen-fourteenths, dropping lightly to the ground. "Not the Book of Betty Barber?"

Minora nodded.

"But I thought I saw you getting that out of the trunk a minute ago," said the Fraction.

"We were trying to get it," said Minora, "but we can't find it—it's gone."

"Gone !" shouted Thirteen-fourteenths.

"Yes, gone," shouted Half-term from inside the tree. "Catch her if you can, I couldn't hold her any longer."



“HALF-TERM FOUND HIMSELF TUMBLING DOWN” (p. 65)

WHAT THE WHITE OWL KNEW

Mrs. Owl fluttered out and flew away.

Thirteen-fourteenths was not troubling about Half-term, he was poking his arm through the hole in the trunk at the foot of the tree, trying to find the book.

"We thought it was inside the tree," said Minora.

"Of course it is, and so is my arm," said Thirteen-fourteenths, "but I can't feel it, and I can't find Half-term's feet, or I'd tickle his toes. It's really a good thing he tumbled in, he must make a thorough search."

But as he spoke Half-term's head and shoulders appeared in the branches of the tree.

"Wait," screamed Minora, the Major, and the Fraction.

"Not a bit of it," cried Half-term. "I've had enough of this," and he pulled and tugged to get himself out.

"The Book of Betty Barber is somewhere inside the tree," shouted Minora.

"I'm coming out," said Half-term ; but as he spoke something white flew before his eyes, almost striking his face, his foot slipped, and down he fell, grumbling and shouting.

Thirteen-fourteenths started to climb the trunk ; but as he looked up something white fluttered in front of his eyes, and he, too, fell down.

"I've fallen," shouted Half-term inside the tree.

"So have I," called the Fraction, outside.

"It's that Owl," shouted Half-term. "Catch her."

But Mrs. Owl was not to be caught a second time.

"I'll keep her away until you are up in the branches," said Minora.

"She'd better keep out of my way," shouted Half-term.

Minora picked up a big stick, and the Major waved his hat. Mrs. Owl flew away to look for a quieter sleeping place, and Half-term and Thirteen-fourteenths met in the branches of the tree.

Then the Fraction explained about the book ; but as Half-term refused to go down inside the tree again, Thirteen-fourteenths had to go himself. But it was of no use, the book was not there.

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

"Then where is it?" said Major C, as Half-term and Thirteen-fourteenths threw themselves down on the grass, tired out.

"I don't know, and I hope I shall never see it again," said Half-term, who was rather out of temper. "If it hadn't been for that silly old book I shouldn't have been in that tree all that time."

"If it hadn't been for that silly old book, I should never have troubled about Sharps and Flats," said Major C.

"Oh, how did you get on?" said Half-term.

"Get on!" cried the Major.

"We had to get out," said Minora, and then the Major told his sad tale.

"Well, this seems to be a very serious business," said Thirteen-fourteenths, when he had finished. "Major C is driven out—I mean, thinks it well to leave Music Land. Paint Land is nearly dried up, and I strongly suspect Lucy is lost in Nonsense Land."

"And I'm all bruised and sore and tired out," said Half-term. "Well, it's a good job the book of Betty Barber is lost."

"But it may be found," said Thirteen-fourteenths.

"Indeed, it must be found. We must not rest until the book of Betty Barber is found and destroyed. If it is only lost, someone may find it, and it will make more mischief. We will make it our business to find it."

"And tear it into teeny tiny little bits," said Minora.

"Certainly, certainly," said the Major, "but how are we to find it?"

"It seems to me we ought to help them in Paint Land before we bother about the stupid old book," said Half-term. "Let me fetch my sisters; then we will all talk the matter over, and see if something cannot be done."

"Very well," said Thirteen-fourteenths, "we'll have a conference. You fetch your sisters, and until they come we will be looking for the book."

"What's that?" said Minora, as something white flew up into

WHAT THE WHITE OWL KNEW

the tree. "Perhaps the book has wings, perhaps it is a magic book, after all."

"That was only the old white Owl," said Half-term, as he bounded away, "the one I caught."

"Only the old white Owl!" muttered Mrs. Owl. "If he only knew it, I could tell him a pretty tale about the Book of Betty Barber, but they won't see that again, I know. It's gone to——" And still muttering to herself, Mrs. Owl flew away through the wood.

CHAPTER VII

A BOX OF OINTMENT

"I HAVE thought of a splendid plan," said Thirteen-fourteenths. "Until the Conference begins——"

"What is a Conference?" asked Minora.

"Until the Conference begins," said Thirteen-fourteenths, and the Major frowned at Minora, "we will all search high and low for three separate things. What will you hunt for, Minora?"

"I thought we were all to look for the book," said Minora.

"Of course, we are all hoping to find the book," said the Fraction, "but don't you know that if you want to find one thing, the best way is to look for something else?"

Minora shook her head doubtfully.

"Well, we will try your plan," said the Major. "Minora, my dear, look for that wonderful wand of Father Time's. If you really could find it, we could have any number of Sharps and Flats in the house."

"But it isn't lost," objected Minora.

"It may be, by this time," said Thirteen-fourteenths, "and if it isn't, it will be all the more difficult to find in this wood."

"I won't look for the wand," said Minora. "It is silly to look for a thing unless you are sure it is lost. If I must hunt for something I will try to find out that old white Owl. She knew something about the book, I feel sure."

"Then I will look for the wand," said the Major.

A BOX OF OINTMENT

"I will look for the lost piece of my jacket," said Thirteen-fourteenths, "I spend my life looking for that."

"Have you lost a piece of your jacket?" asked Minora. "Nobody would think you had. Your jacket is in a great many pieces, but I don't see one missing."

"The fourteenth piece is missing," said the Fraction sadly. "I used to be a whole number ; then someone stole a piece of my jacket, and since then I have only been Thirteen-fourteenths. But we are wasting time ; we should be working, not talking. Let us search high and low."

"I must search high," said Minora, "Mrs. Owl will be sleeping in some hollow tree."

They all three set to work. The Major hunted bush and tree, and searched most unlikely and unpromising places ; but, needless to say, he didn't find anything at all.

The Fraction found something, not the book, not the lost piece of jacket, but a small round box. He shouted to the others to come and look at it.

"I've found this," he said.

"Where did you find it?" asked the Major.

"In the hollow trunk in which I hid the book, queerly enough," said Thirteen-fourteenths.

"Let me look at it," said Minora, "is there anything inside?"

She took the box and examined it carefully, inside and out.

"Writing on the label," she said, "but no notes, or sharps or flats," she added slyly, looking at the Major.

"I hope not, I'm sure," said the Major.

"No figures," said Thirteen-fourteenths. "I wonder what is inside. Hullo, I hear Half-term coming back through the wood ; but I fancy I hear two voices. I wonder if it is Half-term."

But Minora was looking at the soft, white, sticky stuff inside the box. She touched it with her finger, and she popped a little bit in her mouth ; but it was not good to eat, and she made a grimace.

"I wonder what it is," she said.

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

"It is Half-term," said Thirteen-fourteenths, who had climbed into the tree, "and he is helping somebody along—a girl. She does seem tired. I'll go and help too." And the Fraction jumped down from the tree and bounded away to meet the boy.

"Perhaps I had better go, too," began the Major.

But Minora pulled his coat.

"Look," she said, "there are three of them coming down the other path. Don't leave me alone. Who are they?"

The Major turned round, to see the three holiday fairies coming through the wood.

"Capital," cried the Major, "the very three people we want to see—the Holiday Fairies!"

"They don't look as if they were out for a holiday," said Minora, for the three fairies were not jumping and skipping, and laughing and joking, as usual, but walking solemnly and soberly.

"Something has happened," said the Major; "they were so cheerful the last time I saw them."

"They don't look any more cheerful than the other three," said Minora, as Half-term and the Fraction appeared, helping a girl who seemed scarcely able to walk. "If this is a Conference, I don't think it is much fun. Flats and Sharps are jolly compared with these six dreary, dismal——"

"Hush, Minora," said Major C.

"Let her rest against the tree," said Half-term. "She told me she wanted to get to the tree."

Minora and the Major moved away, and the girl sank on the ground and shut her eyes.

Half-term looked up, saw the fairies, and beckoned to them.

"There," he said, pointing to the girl, "do you see who it is?"

Easter looked at the girl and shook her head. Summer seemed puzzled; but Christmas bent over the girl, and then started back with a cry of horror.

"Easter, Summer," she cried, "it can't be." And then in a whisper she added, "It is the B. of a C. of a P. G."



"HELPING A GIRL WHO SEEMED SCARCELY ABLE TO WALK."

A BOX OF OINTMENT

"Poor little Miss Crimson Lake!" said Major C. "What has happened to her? She was so pretty, so pink, and so lively."

"She looks rather washed out now," said Minora.

The holiday fairies looked at one another, looked at poor Crimson Lake, and burst out crying.

"It's our fault," said Christmas.

"Our fault," sobbed Easter.

"We are so sorry," said Summer.

"Then help us to do something to make her better," said Thirteen-fourteenths. "You know, it isn't all our fault. Betty Barber's book is at the bottom of the mischief. I expect poor Crimson Lake was trying to get here to look for the book."

Half-term nodded. "She was talking about the tree and the book, when I met her."

"She's gone to sleep," said Christmas, "perhaps that will do her good."

"We will move further away, so as not to waken her," said Minora.

"The Conference Meeting will be held in the Upper Hall," said Thirteen-fourteenths, and he swung himself up into the branches of the tree. The fairies followed, so did Minora, and the Major soon found himself sitting astride a branch, feeling quite happy and comfortable.

"I recommend the outside of the tree, not the inside," said Half-term, as they all settled down to plot and plan and scheme.

At the foot of the tree Crimson Lake lay quite still, fast asleep. As the Fraction had guessed, she had tried to get to the tree to tear up the book, feeling that that was the first thing to do; but had she not met Half-term she would never have reached the tree, for she was tired out.

Chatter, chatter, chatter went the voices up in the tree.

Half-term's voice could be heard distinctly above the others:

"Of course, Santa Claus would help."

Miss Crimson Lake moved in her sleep.

"I must find out if Lucy is in Nonsense Land, and help her out.

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

It was the Fraction speaking this time. Then once more they all began to talk together. They were all so eager to help, that they were nearly quarrelling as to which could help most.

Miss Crimson Lake rubbed her eyes and opened them slowly.

"The book must be found," said the Fraction, up in the tree.

Miss Crimson Lake sat up slowly, wondering where she could be.

"If only Queen Harmony would help," said Minora.

Then once more chatter, chatter, chatter.

Miss Crimson Lake stared up at the tree, feeling half frightened. Then she heard footsteps coming through the wood, and saw a boy running quickly towards her.

He began to speak almost as soon as he saw her, long before he reached her.

"Have you seen Thirteen-fourteenths?" he called.

Miss Crimson Lake shook her head.

"He's wanted at once," said the boy, "I can't stop, I must find him."

Miss Crimson Lake shook her head again, and the boy, never ceasing to run, disappeared through the wood, calling as he went, "Thirteen-fourteenths. Thirteen-fourteenths is wanted."

Before he was out of sight the Fraction's voice was heard in the tree calling, "Here," and when Miss Crimson Lake looked up she saw Thirteen-fourteenths swing himself to the ground over her head. One after another the others followed him.

"Are you better?" asked Christmas eagerly.

Miss Crimson Lake nodded.

"Who was it calling me?" asked Thirteen-fourteenths.

Crimson Lake pointed to the path down which the boy had run.

"Was it a boy dressed in black and white, with a round black ball on his head?" asked the Fraction, and when Miss Crimson Lake nodded he looked very solemn. "It must be Repeater," he said; "if he wants me, I think I must go back, for they must be in trouble at home."

A BOX OF OINTMENT

Miss Crimson Lake nodded again, and her lips moved to say "Yes."

"Well, he is sure to pass this way again," said Thirteen-fourteenths, "he always keeps on running. I had better wait to hear his message ; then I must go. Now, before we separate, each to do our own particular work, let us tell Crimson Lake our plans, and see if she approves."

"We will," cried the fairies and Minora.

"It will cheer her," said the Major.

"Your troubles will soon be over," said Half-term.

Crimson Lake managed to smile a faint, feeble little smile.

"Well, first of all," said Half-term, "my sisters and I will tell the children they must stop painting."

Crimson Lake nodded energetically.

"Then," said Christmas, "we are going to Father to ask him to tell Santa Claus to put matters to rights in Paint Land."

"And I am going to Queen Harmony," said Minora, "to ask her to pay a visit to the Scale family."

Crimson Lake looked puzzled, and shook her head.

"You haven't heard how badly I've been treated by the Sharps and Flats," said Major C, "they nearly battered my house down."

"I expect you don't know either that 'good little Lucy' is lost in Nonsense Land," said Half-term.

Crimson Lake sighed a big, big sigh.

"But I shall get her out," said Thirteen-fourteenths, "and we are everyone to try and find the Book of Betty Barber, to tear it up into little bits."

At last Miss Crimson Lake found her voice.

"Is it lost?" she asked.

"Lost! Lost!" said Minora and the Major together.

"It is indeed," said Thirteen-fourteenths.

"It must be found," said Crimson Lake.

"It shall be found," said the Fraction.

"I hear someone calling," said Minora.

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

They all listened. Through the wood the voice could be heard distinctly, "Thirteen-fourteenths is wanted! Thirteen-fourteenths is wanted."

"It is Repeater," said the Fraction, "and he is coming this way. I knew he would come, he never stops running."

"You are wanted at home, Thirteen-fourteenths."

They could hear the words before they could see the boy.

"I must go," said Thirteen-fourteenths. "Good-bye."

"But he isn't here yet," said Half-term.

"He won't stay when he gets here," said the Fraction, "he never stops. Good-bye. Work hard, all of you. I will work hard, too. I will find the book. But where is the round box I *did* find?"

"Thirteen-fourteenths!" The voice sounded much nearer.

"Here is the box," said Minora. "Look at it, Half-term. Do you see what it says outside?"

"One shilling a box," read Half-term.

"Give it to me," said the Fraction. "Here he comes."

But Christmas caught the box as Half-term threw it to the Fraction.

"What is inside, I wonder?" she said, and she took off the lid.

"Christmas, give me the box," said the Fraction.

Repeater was hastening down the path.

"Thirteen-fourteenths, you are wanted at home," he called, "there is trouble, trouble, trouble at home."

"Say I am coming," said the Fraction, "coming at once."

And the boy took up the new call, and ran past them all through the wood, shouting, "Thirteen-fourteenths is coming, coming at once."

"My box," said Thirteen-fourteenths.

But the fairies had recovered their spirits. They began to play a game of catch with the box, Christmas throwing it to Easter, Easter to Summer.

Poor Thirteen-fourteenths ran from one to the other.



"THEY BEGAN TO PLAY A GAME OF CATCH WITH THE BOX" (p. 78)

A BOX OF OINTMENT

"If you won't give it to me, I shall have to go without it," he said at last. "I must go."

Minora jumped up, and, by a clever catch, seized the box and threw it to the Fraction.

"Such a fuss about a box of ointment!" said Christmas, as Thirteen-fourteenths ran off with it, bounding through the wood trying to overtake Repeater, whose voice could still be heard in the far distance, shouting, "Thirteen-fourteenths is coming, coming at once."

"Was it ointment?" said Minora. "We were wondering what it was, it certainly didn't taste very good."

The holiday fairies began to laugh.

"Taste very good!" laughed Christmas, and then the three sisters joined hands, and dancing round shouted in chorus:

"It's good for bumps and good for breaks,
It's good for thumps and good for shakes,
It's a capital thing for hard, hard knocks,
And it only costs a shilling a box."

The others could not help laughing, and even Crimson Lake laughed, too.

But when the fairies stopped singing, and threw themselves down to rest, Major C looked very serious.

"Come, Minora," he said, "we must play no longer, we must get to work. I am off to find Queen Harmony."

"Good-bye," shouted Christmas, suddenly picking herself up. Easter and Summer followed her through the wood.

"They are flighty things," said Minora.

"But what will you do?" said Half-term, who was bending over Crimson Lake.

"I shall be all right," said Crimson Lake, "I feel much better. I will go back to Paint Land to cheer them, to tell them not to despair, that help is coming. Do not wait for me, I go slowly, and thank you, thank you." And as she watched Half-term and Minora hurrying away she said to herself, "And to think I ever called him a rude fellow!"

CHAPTER VIII

IN SUM LAND

THIRTEEN-FOURTEENTHS hurried through the wood as fast as his legs could carry him ; but the holiday fairies had wasted so much time teasing him about the box that he was some distance behind Repeater, and, indeed, only once heard his call, far away in the distance.

"How tiresome," he said, "if only I could have run home by Repeater's side, I could have talked things over and found out what was the matter ; but those holiday fairies always do waste precious time."

Once out of the wood he began to trot, and when he saw in the distance the big buildings he knew so well, he began to run faster and faster.

The big gate was not even latched, it was thrown wide open, and there was nobody to be seen near it or at the lodge.

In front of one of the biggest buildings a heavy waggon was standing. It was very full, packed with piles of exercise-books, hundreds and hundreds of books and bundles of papers.

"Perhaps the driver will know what is the matter," said the Fraction, hurrying towards the waggon. "Something must be wrong, or somebody would be sorting that load and carrying some of those sums into the compound subtraction building."

But when he reached the waggon he found nobody, not even a driver. The waggon stood deserted.

He ran up the steps of the buildings, ran indoors, and began shouting through the rooms :

IN SUM LAND

"Ellessdee, Ellessdee, are you there?"

Only his own voice sounded through the empty house, the building was deserted, too.

"Well, this is queer, indeed," he said, looking about him, "and never do I remember seeing such an untidy house. Ellessdee, my young friend, you certainly ought to be at home clearing up this mess. Wrong sums lying about mixed up with right sums, pence and pounds lying about on the floor. It is quite evident that something has gone wrong with poor old Ellessdee."

But in the small building next door Thirteen-fourteenths found pretty nearly the same state of things—compound addition sums lying about, papers and books not sorted. There was not quite such untidiness, not quite so much mess, for there was never as much work in the addition as in the subtraction building; people in the world seem to find it easier to take money away than to pile it up. Thirteen-fourteenths began to feel very sad and sorry as he walked through house after house, and found confusion and disorder everywhere, and not even a cipher to speak to.

At last, from one of the windows, he caught sight of two figures hurrying away from the store building, where all the paper was kept, carrying large piles of paper.

He recognised the figures, too, and gave a shout of surprise, wonder, and amazement.

"Tare and Tret working! Tare and Tret busy!" he cried. "Then, indeed, something is terribly wrong! I must find out what is the matter. I have never before seen Tare or Tret do a stroke of work."

He bounded down the stairs and out of the house, but by the time he reached the door Tare and Tret had disappeared.

Thirteen-fourteenths looked more puzzled than ever.

"They must have walked quickly," he said, "I didn't know they could hurry. Hullo! A piece of paper!"

It was a piece of paper lying on the ground, and further on he could see another piece.

"Hurrah!" he shouted, "they can't work properly, they are

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

not used to it. If only they have dropped enough pieces of paper, I shall easily find where—— Yes, there's another piece, on the path leading to the Correcting-hall. How stupid of me, I never thought of looking in there."

The Fraction hurried away from the buildings, following up the pieces of paper, until he reached the round hall, with its many, many doors. Thirteen-fourteenths could hear voices calling to one another as he walked up the path, and he caught glimpses of heads bent eagerly over work through the windows.

The hall was not deserted.

"Everyone must be in the hall," he said. "What an amount of work they must have, and I can't understand it. The children, as I know only too well, have been painting all day long, I couldn't persuade them to look at a sum. I'll listen a minute or two before I go in; perhaps I may learn something."

But all Thirteen-fourteenths could hear at the door was a buzz of chatter. "Pass the india-rubber!" "Anyone got a blue pencil?" "More paper, please," and other equally valuable and interesting remarks.

He pushed open the door and stepped inside.

"It is Thirteen-fourteenths," called out several voices, and before he could speak a word he found himself dragged across the hall and placed in a desk. A large blue pencil was put in his hand, a large piece of paper was laid before him, which was covered with figures, and at the bottom of which was written in big letters—

"Answer ? $\frac{189645367862157}{23853781909085}$."

Thirteen-fourteenths stared at the paper, and then stared about him.

"It's rather a big one," he said at last, "and quite impossible, I should think."

Immediately all the heads were lifted from all the desks, and all the voices shouted loudly :

"Impossible ! Of course it's impossible. They are all impossible."

IN SUM LAND

"There are seven like that," said Tare, who was standing at the Fraction's elbow. "They want you badly to help put the sums right."

"There must be something wrong with the question," said Thirteen-fourteenths.

"He says there's something wrong with the question," shouted Repeater, who was standing behind the Fraction's back.

Once more all the heads were lifted from all the desks, and this time all the voices shouted with scornful laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho, ho! He's a clever chap! No wonder he can't find the piece of his jacket. He'll never be a whole number again."

"Do you think we should have been working at these sums all this time if we had had the right questions?" demanded a boy whose black and white dress, covered with L's and S's and D's, clearly showed he was the Ellessdee Thirteen-fourteenths had expected to find in the buildings.

"If we had had the right questions," shouted a girl, "our backs and our heads wouldn't be aching this minute."

"Anybody can put wrong sums right if they have the right questions," called several figures.

Thirteen-fourteenths felt sorry and angry too; angry because they were cross with him, and sorry that they were all so tired and worried and miserable. He looked at the paper in front of him.

"Where did this come from?" he demanded, turning to Repeater.

"Where did it come from?" shouted Repeater.

"It was copied from the book," said Tare.

"The terrible, terrible book, which has made all the work," said Tret.

"Were all the sums in it like this one?" said Thirteen-fourteenths.

"Mine are worse," said Ellessdee. "There are pounds divided by pigs, and peas multiplied by shillings. I shall never get mine right."

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

"And who did the sums in the book?" asked Thirteen-fourteenths.

They all shook their heads.

Then Ellessdee said angrily :

"I wish we knew whose book it was. We would——" Then he stopped. "What would we do to the boy or girl, whichever it was, who did all these sums so terribly wrong?"

They all rose in their desks, and Ellessdee held the paper over his head.

"We would tear that boy or that girl up into teeny tiny pieces, as we tear up these papers now," shouted Ellessdee.

"Tear up these papers," shouted Repeater, picking up the paper from the Fraction's desk. And for one minute there was a sound of tearing paper, and then showers of little pieces were thrown up in the air, and fell fluttering to the ground.

"That doesn't do much good," said Thirteen-fourteenths. "The sums must be put right. You know that as well as I do, and now you will only have to set to work and copy them all out again."

"Copy them all out again," shouted Repeater.

"Give me some more paper, Tare," said Ellessdee. "I know I shall have to copy the old sums out again, but I feel better all the same. It has relieved my feelings wonderfully."

Tare carried round the sheets of paper.

"I'll get the book," said Ellessdee.

"Let me see it for one minute," said Thirteen-fourteenths.

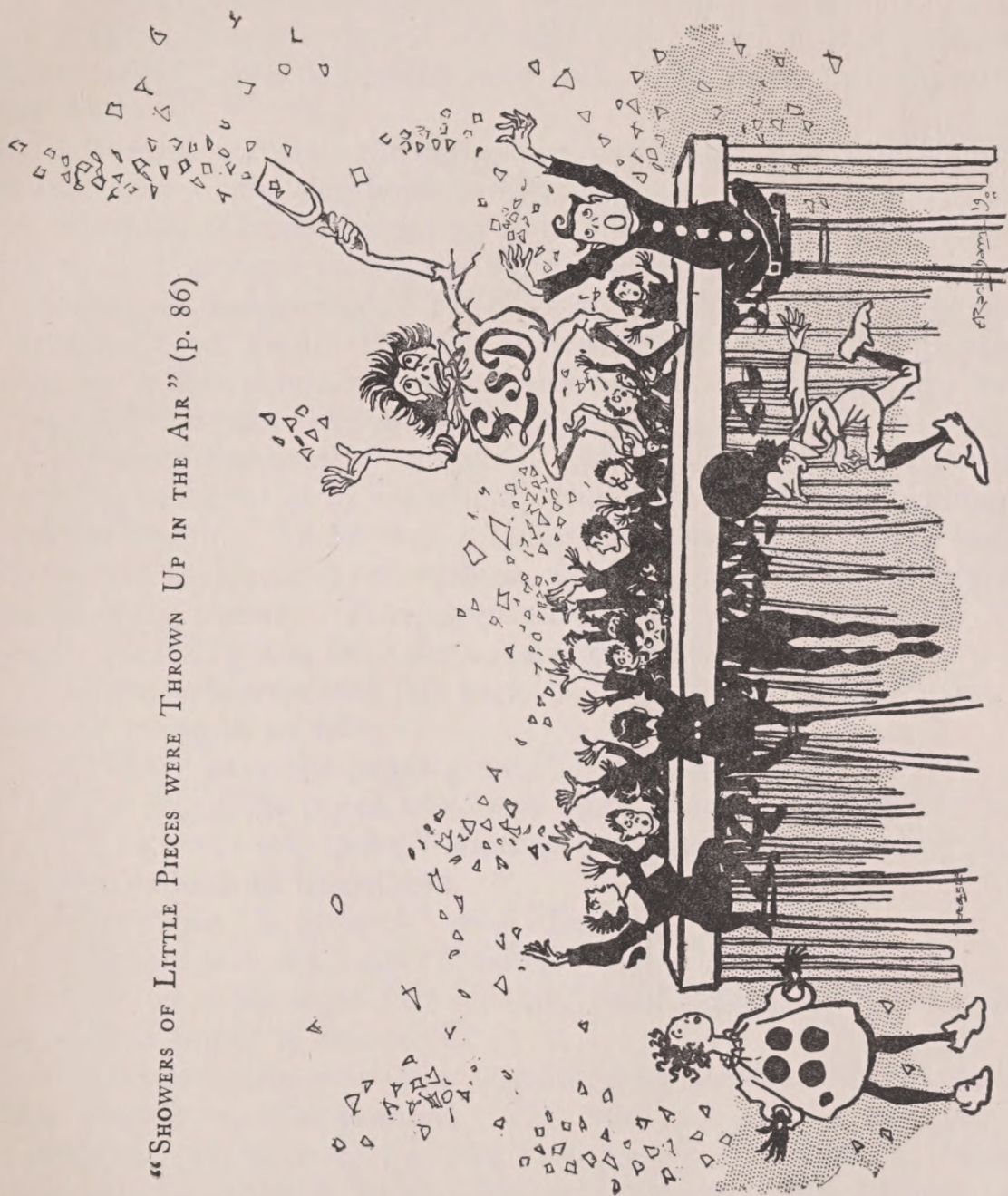
Ellessdee walked out of the hall shouting, "All right, you shall see it."

"They had to take the book outside," explained Tare.

"It made them so very angry to see it," added Tret.

"It isn't a very big book," explained the girl called Sois, who had charge of the proportion sums, and whose white dress was covered with four big black dots in front, and four big black dots behind. "It looks just like an ordinary exercise book. But, oh, sir, when you look inside," and the girl sighed, "page after page of the wrongest sums you ever beheld."

"SHOWERS OF LITTLE PIECES WERE THROWN UP IN THE AIR" (p. 86)



IN SUM LAND

"Where did the book come from?" asked the Fraction.

"Where did it come from?" asked Tare, looking at Tret.

"Why, Ellessdee found it," said Sois, "and it was about the worst day's work Ellessdee ever did. But here he comes with the book."

Ellessdee marched through the door up the hall, holding what looked like a very thin book in his hand.

Thirteen-fourteenths stared at it. Thirteen-fourteenths rubbed his eyes, Thirteen-fourteenths would have shouted, but his breath suddenly all disappeared. He couldn't shout, he could only open his mouth and gasp. For the exercise book in Ellessdee's hands was no ordinary book at all, it was the most extraordinary book that ever existed. It was the Book of Betty Barber!

Thirteen-fourteenths stretched out his hand; but Ellessdee took no notice of him, he held up the book slowly and solemnly, and opened it. There was a shout from everyone in the hall, a shout not of joy, not of sadness, not of horror, but of surprise, wonderful surprise. There were no pages inside the book! The pages were all gone, only the covers were left!

Thirteen-fourteenths fell back in his seat and groaned, but all the others began to talk.

"Where have the pages gone?" said Tare.

"I thought the cover was loose when I had the book," said Sois.

"The cover was loose," shouted Repeater, and his voice could be heard above all the others.

"Now, isn't it queer?" said Ellessdee.

"Where was the book?" asked Tret.

"Under a big stone just outside," said Ellessdee, "in the place in which I found it first of all."

Thirteen-fourteenths was beginning to recover. Never before had he felt so disappointed. For one moment he thought his search was at an end, for one moment he had pictured himself returning in triumph to the Major, Half-term, and Minora, and the others, to tell them he had found the book. It was indeed a blow to discover that not the book itself, but only the covers, were

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

there, and that the most important part of it was still missing. He jumped up on the desk in front of him, and held up his hand for silence.

"Friends," he said, "this book is more troublesome, more terrible, than you think. It must be found, it must be destroyed. Let me tell you all about it."

"Go on, go on," shouted several voices.

"You think it is only an exercise book, full of wrong sums," continued Thirteen-fourteenths.

"Only!" whispered Sois; but the other figures near her said, "Hush, hush!"

"You only troubled about one end of the book," said Thirteen-fourteenths. "At the other is written the Diary of Betty Barber." The Fraction groaned out the name, but the hall was only filled with wondering faces, not horrified ones.

"It would be difficult to tell you all the trouble that diary has caused. An honoured Major, Major C, has been driven out of Music Land; my dear friend 'Good little Lucy' is lost—lost in Nonsense Land; Paint Land is almost dried up; and, added to all this, I find you all tired and cross with overwork and worry, your houses neglected, your proper work left; and all through this terrible book, this Book of Betty Barber."

"This terrible Book of Betty Barber," shouted Repeater, as Thirteen-fourteenths paused to get his breath.

"We must find this book," said the Fraction, "and we must tear it into little pieces."

"Let us all go and look for it," said Sois.

"Where did you say you put it, Ellessdee?" asked Tare.

"Outside, under the big stone," said Ellessdee, "Come, Thirteen-fourteenths let me show you the way, and you shall look for yourself."

The Fraction and Ellessdee ran out of the hall, hand in hand, and all the others followed.

There was nothing under the big stone, and after searching near it and round it they went sadly back to the hall.

IN SUM LAND

"I don't know what is to be done," said Thirteen-fourteenths, sitting down in the desk and staring at all the little pieces of paper.

"It's an ill wind that blows nobody any good," whispered Tare to Tret, "if they haven't got copies of the sums, they can't put them right; they will have to rest now."

But Ellessdee did not seem to think so. He was gathering together the little pieces which he had torn up, and was trying to make them fit one another.

As he stooped a small box tumbled out of his jacket on to the floor, rolled to the Fraction's desk, and stopped in front of his feet.

Thirteen-fourteenths picked it up.

"My box," he said, "I must have knocked it down."

"My box," said Ellessdee, "I found it."

Thirteen-fourteenths looked down at Ellessdee, who was getting very red in the face, and was about to place the box on the desk in front of him, when he saw one there already. He examined the boxes carefully. They were exactly alike, small and round, each with "One shilling a box" printed on the label.

"Come here," he said to Ellessdee. "Look there," and he pointed to the boxes. "What does it mean?"

"Two of them," said Ellessdee.

"Two of them," shouted Repeater.

"One is mine," said Thirteen-fourteenths, "and one is Ellessdee's."

"Exactly so," said Ellessdee.

"I found mine near the tree beneath which I had hidden the book," said Thirteen-fourteenths.

"Read stone for tree, and I say 'Exactly so' once more," said Ellessdee.

"One shilling a box," said Thirteen-fourteenths. "Someone must have dropped both boxes."

"If," began Sois, and there was at once silence in the hall. "If one man drops one box and takes one book, how many boxes—

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

no books." And then Sois rubbed her forehead and looked puzzled. "It doesn't seem to come right," she said. "Ought it to be books or boxes? But my head aches so."

"It is nonsense," said Ellessdee.

¹
C.C.F.B. Thirteen-fourteenths jumped up.

"I don't think it is nonsense," he said. "If he has dropped more boxes, I may find which way he has gone and where he is. I found you were all in the Correcting Hall by following the pieces of paper Tare and Tret dropped. At any rate, I will try to find him."

"We'll all come with you," said Ellessdee. "We'll have a box chase—we'll all be the hounds and hunt the hare."

"Hurrah!" shouted Sois.

"Hurrah!" shouted Repeater.

CHAPTER IX

THE BOX CHASE

"ONE—two—three—away," shouted Thirteen-fourteenths.

And away they all went, one after the other, one on the top of the other, pleased to get out of the hall in which they had been shut up so long, delighted to run about and stretch their legs.

Sois found the first box, close to the lodge gates, and a halt was called to examine it. It was passed from hand to hand, and declared to be exactly like the other two.

"We're on the track," cried Thirteen-fourteenths.

"On the track," shouted Repeater.

"Then forward again," shouted Sois.

The black and white figures hurried through the gates away out of Sum Land.

"Another box!" shouted Ellessdee.

"Hurrah, give it to me!" cried Thirteen-fourteenths, and box number four was added to the collection.

Thirteen-fourteenths was eager to find more boxes, and once more the troop began to run and jump. Boxes number five and six were found not far away from number four, and the Fraction tucked them away in his pockets, without stopping the party.

"I hope there are not many more," said Thirteen-fourteenths. "I want to find the hare, the man who is dropping the boxes."

"Another box!" cried Tare, picking up something as he ran, "no lid this time!"

"And here's another!" shouted Tret.

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

"There seem to be always two together," said Ellessdee. "He drops them in couples."

On they ran until they came to a place where several roads met.

"Well, here's another," cried Sois.

"And another," said Repeater, "at the foot of the sign-post."

"We must stop a minute," said Ellessdee. "I want to rest, and you must pack your boxes away, Thirteen-fourteenths. I'm sure your pockets are full."

"We'll all rest," said Tare.

"Indeed we will," said Tret, and he threw himself down on the ground.

But the Fraction did not sit down, though he stood still.

"I wonder which path we ought to take," he said, looking up at the sign-post above his head.

It was a difficult question, for there were several roads meeting.

"To Nonsense Land, To Music Land, To Paint Land, To Sum Land, To Rhyme Land, To the Tall Tall Tree," read Sois, staring up at the sign-post.

"And we don't know which way he went," said Thirteen-fourteenths.

"We must divide into parties," said Sois.

"It seems to me that some of us ought to go back home," said Ellessdee. "If we don't find the book, we shall have to put all those bits of paper together; for you know, some way or other, we must get those sums right."

Tare looked at Tret, and yawned a big yawn. "I'm tired," he said.

"If a man drops twelve boxes, how many will he drop?" said Sois.

"He may drop hundreds and hundreds," said Ellessdee, "and men may come and men may go, but I can't go on for ever, with all those sums waiting to be done at home."

"But the book!" said Thirteen-fourteenths. "We must find the book. Now listen, I have a plan: Sois shall run for five minutes towards Music Land, Ellessdee shall run for the same time



“‘THEN FORWARD AGAIN,’
SHOUTED SOIS” (p. 93)

THE BOX CHASE

towards Paint Land, I will go towards Nonsense Land. Then we shall know, if none of us find any boxes, that the hare is to be found in Rhyme Land, for he would not go to the tree."

"But what are we to do?" asked the others.

"Sit still for five minutes here," said the Fraction, "and when the time is up help Repeater to call us back."

"A splendid plan," cried Tare.

"Grand!" said Tret.

"If I find a box," said Ellessdee, "you must go on your journey towards Paint Land without me. I'm very sorry, but I think I must go back home."

"And if I find a box," said Sois, "the box chase must be finished in Music Land without me. I must go back, too."

"We will first find a box, then we can decide what to do," said Thirteen-fourteenths.

"One, two, three, away!" he shouted.

He, Ellessdee, and Sois were soon out of sight. For the first two minutes the others lay still, resting; but at the end of the third minute Tare said to Tret—

"A box chase is very tiring, I don't want to go any further."

"Neither do I," said Tret.

"At the end of the time they will come back," said Tare, "and if they have found only one more box, we shall have to start the chase again. Don't you think——?"

"I do," said one of the figures.

"So do I," said another.

"Four minutes," called Repeater.

"Well, then, don't you also think if we are going, we may as well go at once?" said Tare.

"Wait until the time is up," said Tret.

So they waited and rested, and when Repeater said, "Five minutes," they all shouted, "Time's up," then picked themselves up from the ground, and ran down the path back to Sum Land as fast as their legs could carry them.

Ellessdee was the first of the three to reach the sign-post,

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

and he stared about him, much astonished not to find anybody there.

"Well," he said, feeling rather annoyed, "I ran very quickly, they might have waited for me."

"Hullo!" called a voice.

Ellessdee looked up. It was Sois hurrying down the path quite breathless.

"They've gone," said Ellessdee, "without waiting for us, isn't it horrid of them?"

"Which way did they go?" asked Sois. "I didn't find a box. Did you?"

"Not a sign of one," said Ellessdee, "I suppose they have all gone to Rhyme Land. I'm not going, I'm off home, and you had better come home too. I call this a wild goose chase, not a box chase."

"If one wild goose——" said Sois.

"If you don't come home," said Ellessdee, who was feeling quite cross and bad-tempered, "something will happen."

They were scarcely out of sight when Thirteen-fourteenths appeared, looking rather depressed, walking quite slowly, with his eyes fastened to the ground. He had not found boxes, lids, anything. He bumped into the sign-post with not looking where he was going, and then stared up at it as if he had never seen it before.

"It can't be the right place," he said. "Where are the others? They were to wait." Then he stared about him. "It is the right place," he said. "Now where have they gone?" I think I can guess—back to Sum Land. They were all getting tired of the chase. If they had found any boxes, they would have let me know quickly enough. Well, I suppose I must go by myself to Rhyme Land, and hope to find the hare there. Hullo, there's a procession coming down the road, I'll hide and watch."

The Fraction ran to the nearest tree, and climbed into it.

Four Rooks, marching along solemnly, headed the procession, behind them came four more, but they were fastened to a basket,

THE BOX CHASE

a work-basket, which rolled along on empty cotton reel wheels, as smoothly as possible. In the work-basket, on a white roll of work, sat a Thimble and a Needle, looking quite pleased with themselves. On one side of this queer carriage a pair of Scissors marched along, on the other stalked a tall, pink Fox-glove. All round the carriage tripped a number of dainty little Violets, who kept trying to curtsy as they walked, and behind it followed a crowd of animals—horses, oxen, and sheep. When they came to the sign-post they halted.

The Scissors looked up and read aloud, "To Nonsense Land." Then he turned to the Thimble, and said, "Drive on."

Thirteen-fourteenths stared after them until the last sheep had disappeared down the road, then he jumped down from his tree.

"I wonder who they are, and why they are going to Nonsense Land," he said, "and I wonder if they have found any boxes. I'll run after them and ask them."

He ran down the road with a skip and a jump and a bound, and he very quickly caught up the procession, for they were not travelling very quickly. He made his way through the horses and oxen and sheep, and tried to catch one of the Violets, but she easily kept out of his way.

At last the Scissors noticed him, and at once the Scissors made a sign to the Thimble, and the whole procession stopped.

Thirteen-fourteenths bowed his very best bow.

"Might I ask, sir——" he began.

"My name is Snip," said the Scissors.

"And mine Thirteen-fourteenths," said the Fraction. "Might I ask, Mr. Snip, if on your journey from Rhyme Land you have found any boxes similar to these?" and Thirteen-fourteenths took three or four out of his pocket.

"We have not seen any such boxes on our journey," said Mr. Snip, "but doubtless there are many such in Nonsense Land. He is always dropping them about."

"Who is always dropping them about?" asked the Fraction eagerly.

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

All the little Violets joined hands in a circle round the Fraction, and shouted as loudly as such small bits of things could shout :

"By the use of this ointment, one shilling a box. Allow me to sell you a couple."

Then they all began to laugh, and the Thimble, the Needle, the Rooks, and all the other animals joined in.

"Father William, you know," explained Mr. Snip, "Father William always carries about boxes of this ointment, and drops them too."

"And who is Father William?" asked the Fraction.

"If you will walk along with us," said Mr. Snip, "I will tell you all I know about Father William, an exceedingly curious person. But we must be moving on, or we shall be late, and it is most important that we should not be late. Excuse me, one moment."

Mr. Snip clicked sharply three times, then calling, "On, on, we shall be too late to help Lucy," made a sign to the Thimble, and once more the procession started.

"To help Lucy?" repeated Thirteen-fourteenths. Then he looked around him. "Then you are Lucy's," he said.

"Of course," said Mr. Snip. "We are all Lucy's, and we are off to Nonsense Land to try to help her out. One of the Rooks heard from Mrs. Owl, who had heard from someone else—and, by the way, I believe that that someone was the same Father William you were asking about—heard that Lucy, who is lost in Nonsense Land, was to appear this very day before the Court of the Grand Panjandrum to prove that she was sense, not nonsense."

"And we thought we could help her, so we set off at once," cawed one of the Rooks who was drawing the basket.

"But we couldn't get through the little gate, there were so many of us, and we had to come all the way round," said another.

"I wish I could help too," said the Fraction, "but I am looking for a book, which I believe your friend Father William has in his possession."

"Why, Mrs. Owl said something about Father William fetching

THE BOX CHASE

a book," said the Rook. "Lucy wanted the book, I fancy, but I didn't much attend to that part of the story."

"Then, perhaps Father William has taken it to Lucy in Nonsense Land," said Thirteen-fourteenths, "does Father William live in Nonsense Land? Tell me about him, tell me about him, tell me quickly." And Thirteen-fourteenths could scarcely keep still he was so excited.

"Let me speak to them all one minute," said Mr. Snip, "for we must be nearing Nonsense Land."

"Friends," he said, "remember we have come to help Lucy. We shall need great patience, great watchfulness, strict obedience. Will you all be watchful, patient, and obedient to me? I will lead you, and if we are able to help Lucy out of Nonsense Land she will take us back to our own tree, and we shall all be happy once more."

"We promise," cawed the Rooks.

"Obedience, patience, and watchfulness," said the others.

"Then forward," said the Scissors.

"Now tell me all about Father William," said the Fraction.

Mr. Snip explained how Father William had once lived in the Land of Poetry, how he had wandered into Nonsense Land, and could not find his way back to his own home again.

"He spends all his time trying to find the way," said Mr. Snip, "he is a restless spirit."

"But I don't now understand how the book got into Nonsense Land," said Thirteen-fourteenths.

"Excuse me," said Mr. Snip, "we must not discuss the question further now. We are approaching Nonsense Land. We must move quietly with the greatest caution. We must not speak, we must not be seen. There are many who wish to keep Lucy in Nonsense Land, and they would drive us away if they knew we meant to try to help her."

"Will you go into Nonsense Land?" asked the Fraction.

"Certainly not," said Mr. Snip. "We must find some place and hide in Border Land. Silence, please," he called.

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

And the procession moved along as quietly as a number of mice.

The Violets climbed into the basket, and hid in the roll of white needlework ; the horses walked on the tips of their hoofs, and very funny they looked, too ; never a "baa" was heard from a heep, nor a click from Mr. Snip himself.

They heard voices calling, "The Court of the Grand Panjandrum is assembling, the Court of the Grand Panjandrum !"

But they only walked more quickly, crept along more quietly without speaking a word. The road began to get narrower, the hedges on each side of it thicker. Mr. Snip motioned to the procession to stop. Then he lay on his back close to the hedge, and quietly kick, kick, kicked until he had kicked a hole in the hedge. He peeped through the hole, and beckoned to the Fraction, and the Fraction peeped through, too, and they both nodded to the others to tell them that it was all right—that this was the place.

The Rooks slipped their heads out of their silk reins, the Needle, Thimble, and Violets jumped lightly out of the basket, the work in the basket began to unroll itself, trying hard not to sigh and groan, for it was rather stiff and uncomfortable. Lucy had squeezed it up so very tight.

Mr. Snip kicked a few more holes in the hedge, motioned each of his helpers by signs to a place, put the Fraction in front of a hole close beside him, and as the voice called, "The Court of the Grand Panjandrum is assembled," Mr. Snip nodded to the Fraction, and even ventured to whisper the tiniest of whispers, "So are we."

CHAPTER X

THE COURT OF THE PANJANDRUM

"ORDER, order, order!" called the Young Man, Father William's son.

And with much arranging of tails, for many of them were animals, and minding of toes, they all settled in their places, and stared very hard at Lucy, who was sitting close to the hedge all by herself, looking very fierce and determined.

"Silence in the court!" called the Young Man, but not one of them stopped talking for a single minute.

"Look at her," said the Lobster, "she looks as cross as if she had lost a claw. Why can't she make up her mind to settle down and stay with us, and be comfortable?"

"She said she would find her way out of Nonsense Land," said the Walrus, "but she hasn't done it, and I knew she wouldn't do it."

The Grand Panjandrum rose in his seat.

"Know all men by these presents," shouted the Young Man.

"Where are the presents?" asked the Carpenter, but nobody took any notice of him.

"All right," said the Pussy Cat, "we know all about that, go on to the next part. Call Anthony Rowley."

So the Young Man looked at the Grand Panjandrum, the Grand Panjandrum nodded, and the Young Man called at the top of his voice :

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

"Anthony Rowley, appear before the Court of the Grand Panjandrum!"

"What's A. Rowley got to do with it?" asked the Carpenter.

"Here he comes, with his three imps," whispered Mr. Snip to the Fraction, as they peeped through the hedge. "Lucy persuaded him to come."

Anthony Rowley himself looked rather sad and depressed; he sighed, and said "Heigho!" But Rowley-Powley, Gammon, and Spinach were three of the liveliest imps you ever saw. Anthony Rowley bowed to the Grand Panjandrum, his three imps only set faces.

"Go on, tell all you know, and don't 'Heigho' more than you can help," whispered the Young Man.

"Heigho," sighed Anthony Rowley. "Life is a tragedy, and I, poor, miserable creature that I am, know only too well the discomfort of uncongenial surroundings."

"Spell it," said the Young Man.

"Do they bite?" asked the Carpenter.

"What's the gentleman talking about?" asked the Pussy Cat.

Lucy jumped to her feet.

"I know what he means," she said, "he means it is very miserable to be with people you don't want to be with, and I quite agree with him."

"Order! Order! Order!" called the Young Man, looking at the Grand Panjandrum's little button, which was bobbing up and down faster and faster every minute, a sure sign that he was getting angry.

Lucy sat down suddenly. Someone from behind pulled her dress hard, and she was too much astonished to object.

Anthony Rowley bowed once more, and began again. "I know myself," he said, "the great discomfort of uncongenial surroundings."

"He is calling us names," whispered Rowley-Powley to Gammon and Spinach.

THE COURT OF THE PANJANDRUM

"And therefore I can entirely understand that a comely maiden of small stature, who desires to proceed with the serious business of life in peaceful repose," continued Anthony Rowley, "may find it disturbing to be compelled to remain in idleness in a land given up to mirth and merriment."

Lucy jumped up to her feet quickly, but once more sat down very suddenly.

"Do you wish to say anything further?" asked the Young Man, watching the Grand Panjandrum's button rather anxiously.

"Heigho!" sighed Anthony Rowley.

"Then now it is our turn," cried Rowley-Powley, and before the Young Man could even call "Order in the court," Rowley-Powley had jumped over Gammon's back, and Gammon over Spinach's. Then they all three rushed at Anthony Rowley, two of them seized his arms, the other picked up his legs, and sweeping him off his feet, they carried him away out of the court.

"Heigho!" said Anthony Rowley.

"Dear me!" said the Owl. "Uncongenial surroundings seem to be exceedingly unpleasant."

The Grand Panjandrum's button was bob, bob, bobbing, up and down, up and down, it looked as if it would bob itself off.

"Lucy, Lucy, appear before the Court of the Grand Panjandrum," shouted the Young Man.

Lucy jumped up quickly, and tried to move forward, only to find that she was a prisoner, her dress seemed somehow caught fast in the hedge.

"Stay where you are," said the Young Man, "and answer the Pussy Cat's questions quietly and quickly."

"How many verses have you?" asked the Pussy Cat.

"Six," said Lucy, "and I won't cut one out."

"Say the third," said the Pussy Cat.

Lucy began to think, began to speak, stopped, looked puzzled, and frowned.

"Is it sense or nonsense?" asked the Young Man.

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

"It is sense," said Lucy; "it is about——" And then once more she stopped to think.

"Well, we can't decide if it's sense or nonsense, if she won't say it," said the Lobster.

"I expect it is nonsense," said the Clangle-Wangle.

"She told me something about rooks sewing as long as their eyes could see," said the Walrus.

But at that moment from the other side of the hedge came the sound of horses neighing, of oxen lowing, and of sheep bleating.

"Of course," said Lucy, and she began to smile. "The third verse, I believe you said," and she felt so happy she nodded at the Grand Panjandrum. "My third verse begins—

"The horses neighed and the oxen lowed,
The sheep's bleat, bleat came o'er the road——"

Before she could say another word every creature in the court began to shout at her.

"Throw her out," said the Walrus.

"We don't want her here," shouted the Clangle-Wangle.

"She knows what she's talking about! Absurd!" cried the Lobster.

"Catch who catch can!" shouted the Grand Panjandrum, speaking at last, his little button bobbing wildly up and down, backwards and forwards.

Every creature rose.

"Form lines!" shouted the Young Man.

"Slay the Jabberwock," shouted a voice.

Lucy, frightened out of her wits, tugged at her dress. The creatures were preparing to make a rush at her, and the line was so long, she knew she would never get through it.

"Who is the Jabberwock?" asked the Carpenter.

"Lucy, Lucy, the impostor!" shouted all the creatures.
"Lucy's a sham!"

Lucy shut her eyes, expecting every minute to feel the Lobster bite her, the Pussy Cat scratch her, something dreadful to happen.



"SHE FOUND HERSELF DRAGGED BACKWARDS RIGHT THROUGH THE HEDGE."

THE COURT OF THE PANJANDRUM

Instead, she felt several tugs and pulls from behind, and she found herself dragged backwards right through the hedge, and rolled gently on to the ground.

She could still hear the angry voices on the other side of the hedge, but she could also hear a voice she knew quite well, very close to her, saying—

“Now then, sharp’s the word. Fill the gap up before they find out where she’s gone.”

She rubbed her eyes, sat up, and stared in wonder.

Her old friend Thirteen-fourteenths was working hard, stuffing straw, grass, branches, rubbish of all kinds into the hedge, to fill up the hole she had been pulled through; and standing round him, helping, were her own animals, the horses holding branches in their mouths, the sheep fetching grass, the rooks carrying bits of all kinds, all helping as hard as they could.

“We’re so glad to see you,” whispered the Violets, curtsying, and the tall pink Foxglove made his very best bow.

Lucy felt almost inclined to cry. They were all helping her, glad to see her, and she had been thinking she was tired of them, she had been wishing to leave some of them out.

“Dear friends,” she said.

“There,” whispered Thirteen-fourteenths, “now come up the road. We’ll get safely to the cross-roads once more, and then we can talk comfortably. Do you hear them?”

There were still shouts coming from the other side of the hedge, not angry shouts, but shouts of wonder, surprise, and bewilderment, “Where is she? Where has she gone? Where’s Lucy?”

“Come,” said Thirteen-fourteenths, “quickly and quietly.”

And once more the party crept back along the road, scarcely making a sound, not speaking a word.

When they reached the sign-post Lucy sank down beside it. She wanted to thank them all, but she was very tired, and the procession did not wait to be thanked. Mr. Snip bowed, the animals each in their own way said “Farewell,” the Violets curtsyed, and

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

the basket drawn by the rooks rolled back down the road to Rhyme Land.

Lucy and Thirteen-fourteenths watched them until they were out of sight.

"They will be glad to get home," said Lucy. "I wish I could go too, but what about the book?"

"Yes," said Thirteen-fourteenths, "the book. Was Father William in the court? I could not see him; but I couldn't see much through the hole, for Mr. Snip had to work hard at it to make it big enough to get through. I thought it wouldn't be finished in time, and I'm afraid, as it was, it was rather too small, you must be a bit scratched. I hope you are not much hurt, but really it was hard work, and you didn't help us."

"I didn't know," said Lucy, "I couldn't understand it. I thought my dress was caught."

"Never mind, all's well that ends well," said the Fraction. "But about the book? I must find it, you don't know all the trouble it has caused."

"And I thought I should prevent mischief by getting it to Nonsense Land," said Lucy. "I persuaded Father William to go and fetch it from the tree, but what happened to him I don't know. He never came back to Nonsense Land."

"If he is not in Nonsense Land this very minute," said Thirteen-Fourteenths, "I don't know where he is. I know he came to these cross-roads. Hullo! What's that noise?"

"Somebody groaning," said Lucy, "somebody in trouble!" And Lucy rose from the ground, her own tiredness almost forgotten "We must find out what is the matter."

"Help, help, here I am!" called a voice.

Lucy and Thirteen-fourteenths hurried down the road leading to the tree. They had not far to go. A little way down the road, crawling along slowly and painfully, they found a girl, sighing and groaning. It was Minora!

Lucy and the Fraction helped her to her feet, and between them they managed to get her back to the sign-post.

THE COURT OF THE PANJANDRUM

"What happened to you?" said the Fraction.

Minora only groaned. Then she slowly opened her clenched fists, and showed a treasure in each hand—a piece of paper screwed into a tight ball, and a small box, a box of ointment.

"Number thirteen," said the Fraction, "where did you get it?"

Lucy was examining the paper carefully. "Sums on one side," she said, "and on the other—— Minora, Minora, where did you get it? Thirteen-fourteenths, it is a page of the book."

"All I could get!" groaned Minora.

Thirteen-fourteenths looked at the paper, then at Lucy, then at Minora. Then he folded up the sheet carefully, and put it away at the bottom of his pocket.

"Now, Minora," said the Fraction, "pull yourself together and tell us about it. Where did you see Father William, and which way did he go?"

Minora sighed, and rubbed her arms and hands and sides.

"I don't know anything about Father William," she said, "but I do know an old gentleman who looks as old as old, and who can jump and run, and tumble, and get up again, and never mind it at all, as if he were as young as young."

Thirteen-fourteenths and Lucy nodded at one another, as much as to say, "That's Father William."

Minora went on:

"I saw him sitting reading the book at the foot of this very sign-post," said Minora, "and I asked him to give it to me. He wouldn't. Then I tried to persuade him to give it to me. He wouldn't. I tried to take it from him, and he ran away so fast I could scarcely keep up with him. Then, when at last I caught him, and tried to take it away, we had a regular scuffle, and I should have got it, only I caught my foot, tripped and tumbled over, and found myself in the ditch with this one page."

"Did he say anything?" asked the Fraction. "Did he tell you why he wanted the book?"

"He never spoke a word until I lay in the ditch, and he was running away," said Minora, "and then he threw this box back to

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

me and shouted, at the top of his voice, 'I kept my limbs supple by the use of this ointment, one shilling a box.'"

"Father William it was," said Lucy, "dear Father William."

"'Dear Father William' do you call him?" said Minora indignantly. "If you were as sore and tired and bruised as I am, you wouldn't say, 'Dear Father William.' 'Dear Father William,' indeed!"

"You don't understand, Minora," said Thirteen-fourteenths, "he was taking the book to Lucy. She had asked him to get it, and had told him what a troublesome, mischief-making book it was."

"Which way did he go when he left you?" asked Lucy.

"I don't know," said Minora, "I chased him a long way down the road leading to the tree, but when I tumbled I didn't see which way he went. I shall have to find out, for I promised Queen Harmony to get the book."

"Then you have been to the Queen," said Thirteen-fourteenths. "How did you get on? What did she say? Where is Major C?"

"One question at a time," said Minora.

"There's someone coming," cried Lucy, "I can hear the tramp of horses."

"I can hear bells," said Minora.

"Who can it be?" asked the Fraction.

The sounds came nearer and nearer. Then down the road dashed a smart sleigh, drawn by six galloping horses, and driven by somebody dressed in bright, bright red.

The sleigh moved so quickly that the three watching had no time to do anything but to stare in wonder.

"Who was it?" said Lucy.

"Was there anything inside?" asked Thirteen-fourteenths.

"Something red," said Minora.

"Did you ever see anyone drive so quickly?" said all three at the same moment.

"It came from Paint Land, and went down the road to the tree," said Thirteen-fourteenths, who had been examining the sign-post,

THE COURT OF THE PANJANDRUM

"and there's someone coming down the road now. Why, it's Half-term!"

"Hurrah, he'll tell us all about it," said Minora, "he's a capital chap."

"But we mustn't all stop talking here, or we shall never get that book," said Thirteen-fourteenths.

"Hullo! Here we are again," shouted Half-term.

And at that moment there was a shout from Minora of "There he is! There he is! Catch him! Catch him!"

She was pointing down the road leading to Nonsense Land. Coming down the road was Father William himself!

CHAPTER XI

FATHER WILLIAM'S STORY

"Go cautiously, surround him, don't let him get away," said Minora.

But, instead of trying to get away, Father William walked to meet them, and seemed pleased to see them. He nodded to Minora quite amiably.

"Better, I hope," he said, "sorry I couldn't oblige you, but I was in a hurry, you know—important business."

Then he turned to Lucy, "Ah, they told me you had mysteriously disappeared, and I guessed you had managed to get out of Nonsense Land, so I thought I would look you up, and we could go back to Rhyme Land together. But I'm afraid I interrupt. Who are these two young gentlemen?"

Thirteen-fourteenths had been trying to keep quiet, but he could not hold his tongue a minute longer.

"The book!" he shouted; he was too excited to speak. "The book, where is the book?"

"Oh, it's all right," said Father William, "keep calm, my young friend, the great thing is to keep calm. In my youth——"

Lucy came to the rescue.

"Dear Father William," she said, "you don't know how very badly we all want to get that book."

"It seems quite a popular work," said Father William.

"It has done so much harm," said Lucy. "Dear Father William, did you get it for me?"

FATHER WILLIAM'S STORY

"Now, I'll tell you all about it," said Father William, "let us find a comfortable place."

"Please first say if you got it," said Thirteen-fourteenths.

"I got it," said the old gentleman, smiling cheerfully, "it's all right, and I can assure you it is a most interesting adventure. In my youth——"

"Let us all go and sit under the tree, where we first found the book," said Lucy. "Then Father William can tell us his story."

"And I will tell you mine," said Minora.

"And I, mine," said Half-term.

"And then, as a grand ending to all the stories," whispered the Fraction to Lucy, as they walked down the road to the tree, "we will tear that book into ninety thousand bits, and scatter them to the four winds of heaven."

"We will," said Lucy, "but be patient. Listen to his story, and don't interrupt him unless he begins about his youth, and then all change the subject as quickly as ever you can."

"He seems quite an amiable old gentleman now," said Minora wonderingly, "but it only shows that you never know."

"Father William," said Lucy, as she sat down beneath the tree, and Half-term climbed on a low branch to swing his legs, "this young man is a great friend of mine. Thirteen-fourteenths is his name. He comes from Sum Land."

"Sum Land!" said Father William, "I know all about Sum Land, it comes into my story. And who is your other friend?"

"Half-term," said Lucy, "Mr. Half-term Holiday."

"The young lady I know. We have met before," said Father William. "She wanted the book."

"Now tell us your adventures," said Half-term.

"I asked you to fetch the book, because I thought it would be sure not to do any more harm in Nonsense Land," said Lucy. "Now go on, what happened to you?"

"I came to this tree," said Father William, "and found a book quite easily, so easily that I thought I must have made a mistake,

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

and that it could not be the right book. I looked inside, and there I saw sums, sums, sums, all marked with a big W."

"And you took them to Sum Land to be put right. Go on," said Thirteen-fourteenths.

Father William looked at him quite solemnly; then he stared at Minora.

"In my youth——" he began.

"Dear Father William," said Lucy quickly, "you left the book in Sum Land."

"Ah, yes," said Father William, "and I was on my way back to the tree to look for another book, when I met a most friendly, obliging Owl, quite an old Owl, and we had a most pleasant conversation about our youth."

Lucy began coughing very loudly.

"I gave her some of my ointment," said Father William, quickly feeling in his pockets, "some of this—Dear me, dear me, I seem to have lost all my boxes."

Thirteen-fourteenths took two boxes out of his pocket and gave them to the old gentleman, who smiled graciously.

"Thank you," he said. "I told the Owl about your troubles, Lucy dear, and she advised me to go and fetch the book from Sum Land. She said she knew that it was the book you wanted, and she thought it would be a good plan to leave the book in Nonsense Land."

"So you fetched it," said Thirteen-fourteenths, interrupting again in spite of Lucy's frowns, "only you left the covers behind."

"And at the cross-roads I met you," said Minora, "and tried to take it away from you."

"And please give me the book this minute," said Thirteen-fourteenths.

"No, please give it to me," said Minora, "I promised to take it to Queen Harmony."

"You shall take it nowhere," said Thirteen-fourteenths, "I mean to tear it into ninety thousand bits this very minute."

"I must have it," said Minora. "Queen Harmony is angry



"I MET A MOST FRIENDLY, OBLIGING OWL."

FATHER WILLIAM'S STORY

with me, and if I take her the book——” and she knelt down in front of Father William. “You will give it to me,” she said, “won’t you?”

“No, give it to me,” shouted the Fraction, and he threw himself in front of Father William.

And all the time Father William was gazing into the air quite calmly, taking no notice of either of them, and Lucy was almost crying, trying to get in a word to keep the other two quiet.

“It seems to me,” said Half-term, “that we must get the book before we can decide what is to be done with it.”

“Dear Father William,” said Lucy.

“In my youth——” said Father William.

Minora and the Fraction jumped up angrily.

“We shall have to take it by force,” said Minora.

“Wait one minute,” said Lucy, “let me try once more. Dear Father William,” she said, and she stood beside him and laid her hand on his shoulder. “Dear Father William, will you give me the book you so kindly fetched for me?”

Father William looked up at her, and smiled a beautiful smile.

“Dear Lucy,” he said, “you asked me to fetch the book when you were in Nonsense Land; I did so, but could not find you there. They said you had disappeared. So, as Mrs. Owl advised, I left the book in Nonsense Land, at the Grand Panjandrum’s Court.”

“In Nonsense Land!” shouted Minora and Half-term.

But Thirteen-fourteenths threw himself on the ground, buried his face in his hands, and groaned aloud.

Lucy alone did not show how disappointed, how grieved, she was.

“Dear Father William,” she said, “will you fetch it for me? I will wait here, under this tree.”

“Certainly,” said Father William, very politely, and he jumped up from the ground.

“And will you be as quick as you can?” said Lucy. “Then we will go back together to Rhyme Land.”

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

"With pleasure," said Father William, and he bounded away through the wood, and disappeared out of sight in a few moments.

For quite two whole minutes not a word was spoken. Lucy sat down on the ground, and leaned against the tree, thinking. Half-term jumped down and sat beside her ; then, at last, he broke the silence.

"Look here," he said, "you chaps, cheer up. It will be all right. I will tell you one piece of good news : Paint Land is all right again, or soon will be."

"Is it ?" said Thirteen-fourteenths, raising his head.

"Indeed it is, and if you turn your head you will see the proof," said Half-term.

"How do, everybody ?" called a cheerful voice. And Miss Crimson Lake, looking as fresh as the freshest pink pink, and even pinker, came tripping down the path.

"Isn't it grand ?" she cried. "We are all happy again. Oh, there you are, you dear old Half-term. Well, did Father Christmas get home safely ? What a charming old man he is, quite charming."

"Was that Father Christmas who drove past us in the red cloak in the sleigh ?" asked Minora.

"Of course it was," said Half-term. "He had Santa Claus with him. We had been to Paint Land with fresh supplies."

"Such piles of paint-boxes," cried Miss Crimson Lake. "Such stacks of paint-brushes !"

"Yes, they did the thing pretty thoroughly whilst they were about it," said Half-term.

"Well, well," said Minora, "then things are not so bad, after all ; and if I tell Queen Harmony that the book is in Nonsense Land——"

"What book ?" said Miss Crimson Lake. "Not the Book of Betty Barber ? Why, what a capital place for it to be in !"

Thirteen-fourteenths shook his head.

"It is all very well," he said, "I am glad you are better, Miss Crimson Lake, I am glad Lucy is out of Nonsense Land ; but I

FATHER WILLIAM'S STORY

can never rest until the book is torn into ninety thousand pieces, and scattered to the four winds of heaven."

"Father William will fetch it," said Lucy.

"He'll never come back," said Minora. "Why, oh why, didn't you go with him?"

"Because he hates to be interrupted," said Lucy solemnly. "I asked you not to interrupt; but never mind, it doesn't matter now," she added quickly, for Minora looked quite grieved and hurt, as if she were going to cry. "Tell us what our dear Major C is doing? Where is he?"

"He's all right," said Minora, "he's at home. He says he will stay at home, too. You see, Queen Harmony was rather annoyed about all the disturbance. She told Major C and me we ought to keep to our own staircase and mind our own business. She told Father Time if he couldn't keep better order she'd have to beat him. Indeed, she scolded us all round, and said she'd make all the Scales chromatic, if they didn't keep their Sharps and Flats in order," and Minora shuddered. "Then she sent me to fetch the book of Betty Barber, to bring it to her."

"What was she going to do with it?" asked Lucy.

"I don't know, I'm sure," said Minora, "but I thought perhaps she would be less angry if I took it to her."

Thirteen-fourteenths dived to the bottom of his pockets, and pulled out the sheet of the book which Minora had taken from Father William. He looked at it carefully.

"Look, Minora," he said, "the piece about Major C is on this very sheet, funnily enough. Take that to Queen Harmony—that is the part of the book she will be interested in—and ask her to destroy it. If we can only get it, we will destroy the rest."

Minora took the sheet and looked at it, and Half-term peeped over her shoulder.

"Yes, that's it," he said, "The very piece—'I think C Major is very dull! I shall let my children play C major sometimes with sharps and flats, and sometimes without.'"

"Queen Harmony is quite certain to tear that into little pieces,"

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

said Minora, "she won't approve of that, will she? However, I'll take care of it, and take it to her. Thank you, Thirteen-fourteenths. I never looked which page of the book I had snatched from Father William."

"There's someone coming through the wood," said Half-term. "If it is Father William, he has not wasted much time."

"There are several someones," said Minora, whose ears were very quick.

"I do hope Father William hasn't brought any of those Nonsense people with him," said Thirteen-fourteenths.

"Hush! Listen!" said Minora. "Five pairs of feet."

"I can see black and white," said Miss Crimson Lake.

"There's Ellessdee," cried Thirteen-fourteenths. And Ellessdee, followed by four black and white figures, came running along the path.

"There he is," shouted Ellessdee, and they all made a rush at the Fraction, gathered round him, and all began talking, or rather gasping, for they were very much out of breath.

"They told us where it was," gasped Ellessdee.

"So we've come to find it," said Sois.

"Up a tree, you know," said Tare.

"Up a tree," shouted Repeater.

"Not this tree, you know, but another one," said Tret.

"It isn't up a tree at all," said Thirteen-fourteenths, "it is in Nonsense Land, and Father William has gone to fetch it."

"That's rubbish," said Ellessdee.

"Nonsense!" shouted Tare.

"It's up a tree," said Tret.

"Up a tree," called Repeater.

"They told us so," explained Sois.

"If you would be quiet one minute, we could talk to you," said Lucy.

"We can't be quiet," said Ellessdee, "we want to find it for him so badly, and we thought he would be pleased."

"He made enough fuss when he lost it," said Sois.

FATHER WILLIAM'S STORY

"Fuss, fuss, fuss," cried Repeater.

"Don't you want to be a whole number again, Thirteen-fourteenths?"

"Of course I do," said Thirteen-fourteenths, "but who do you talk about that just now?"

"Then find it, find it," said Ellessdee.

"Up a tree, up a tree, fastened to the top. Come on!" shouted Tare.

And the five figures turned away from the Fraction, and ran one to one tree, one to another, and began to climb hard.

"What can be the matter with them?" said Half-term, as the others watched them in silence.

Up one tree after another swarmed the figures, calling to one another as they climbed.

"They are not looking for the book," said Lucy at last.

"Then what are they looking for?" said Half-term.

"I expect they are really trying to find the book," said Thirteen-fourteenths, "though they may not be looking for it. I found the first box when I was looking for the piece of my——" And then Thirteen-fourteenths stopped suddenly, and running to the foot of a tree which Ellessdee had begun to climb seized hold of a black leg and held it fast.

"Are you looking for the piece of my jacket, Ellessdee?" he asked eagerly.

"Of course, of course, let me go," said Ellessdee, beginning to kick. "They said it was up a tree. Why don't you look for it yourself?" And, having managed to free his leg from the Fraction's grasp, he began to climb the tree faster than ever.

"Who told you it was up a tree?" called Thirteen-fourteenths; but Ellessdee was far too busy to answer.

"They are looking for the lost piece of my jacket," said the Fraction to Lucy; "isn't it kind of them!"

"Can't we help?" said Half-term, who was aching for something to do.

"What is it like?" asked Miss Crimson Lake.

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

"It is white," said Thirteen-fourteenths, "white like my jacket, and somebody has told the figures that it is up a tree."

"Then I'm off," said Half-term, running to a tree and beginning to climb.

"I may as well help," said Minora, "but I don't think we shall find it."

"We'll try," said Miss Crimson Lake.

"I can't go. I must wait for Father William," said Thirteen-fourteenths, "but, oh, I do hope some of you will find it. If only I could find it, if only I could take it back to Sum Land. What is the matter, Lucy?"

For Lucy, who had been sitting quite still, suddenly began jumping up and down, and clapping her hands.

"Of course, of course," she said, "it is up a tree. I saw it when I was in Nonsense Land. I saw a white thing waving from the top of a tree, and I thought it was you or Half-term signalling to me; but, of course, it was the wind blowing the piece of your jacket. Come on, come on!"

And Lucy ran after the others to climb, climb.

"But how about Father William?" called out Thirteen-fourteenths after her, as she was going.

"You wait for him," said Lucy. "Call me when you see him." And she disappeared out of sight.

"He's coming now, I believe," said Thirteen-fourteenths to himself, "somebody is coming. Hullo! it's those holiday fairies. I'll let them pass by." And the Fraction swung himself into the branches of the tree so energetically that he nearly tumbled down the hollow trunk, as Half-term had done before.

CHAPTER XII

THE END OF THE BOOK

THE holiday fairies were laughing and joking as they came through the wood, dragging after them a very fat bag. It did not seem very heavy, for when Easter jumped on the top of it, Summer and Christmas were still able to move it, and did not appear to mind the extra weight the least bit.

"We'll take it to the tree," said Summer, "then we'll open it."

"I wonder, oh, I wonder what's inside," said Christmas.

Half-term came tumbling down out of a tree.

"Hullo!" he said. "What have you got there? Let me look."

"No, we found it," said Easter.

"Would you quite say, 'found' it?" asked Christmas.

"Scarcely, perhaps," said Summer.

And then all three fairies, shouting with laughter, picked up their prize, carried it to the tree, and sat down on it.

"What's the joke? What's the joke?" called several voices, as Ellessdee, Sois, Miss Crimson Lake, Lucy, Minora, and the others came scrambling, jumping, and tumbling to the ground.

"There are the holiday fairies," cried Ellessdee, "just in time too."

"If it's up a tree, which tree is it up?" shouted Sois.

"It seems to me you've all been up a tree," laughed Christmas.

"Up several trees," said Easter.

And then they all laughed louder than ever.

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

"But we can't find the piece of the jacket," said Ellessdee.
"Can't you really remember on which tree you fastened it?"

Thirteen-fourteenths came tumbling down to the ground, almost on the top of the fairies.

"What?" he cried. "Did you steal the piece of my jacket?"

"Dear, dear," said Christmas. "He was up a tree, too; now, we didn't know that."

"Would you say 'steal'?" said Easter.

"Scarcely, perhaps," said Summer.

"Don't you think you'd say 'borrowed'?" said Christmas.

At that moment a most remarkable noise echoed through the wood. All the figures jumped, Miss Crimson Lake turned pinker than ever, the fairies rose from their seats, and even Thirteenth-fourteenths looked a bit scared. But Lucy only smiled, she had heard the noise before.

"It's all right," she said, "it's only Father William yawning. He must have fallen asleep; and I'm not surprised, for somehow I feel sleepy myself."

The three holiday fairies looked at one another rather anxiously.

"Is Father William an old gentleman?" asked Christmas.

Lucy nodded. "He looks very old," she said, yawning.

"Then don't you think?" asked Easter.

"I do," said Summer.

"So do I," said Christmas.

And then, before the others had realised what they were going to do, with a skip and hop and jump, the three fairies disappeared through the trees.

"So they stole the piece of my jacket, the little scamps," said the Fraction, "I never did like them."

"Perhaps, if you had, they never would have taken it," said Ellessdee, "and they didn't mean to lose it, I know; they meant to hide it to tease you, and then they forgot on which tree they put it."

"If three fairies hide one piece of jacket——" began Sois.

THE END OF THE BOOK

But at that moment Father William, with his white hair standing up straight, his eyes almost staring out of his head, his hands thrown up in the air, came hurrying down the path.

As soon as he saw Lucy he threw himself down before her.

"Forgive me, forgive me," he cried. "It is gone! Gone! Gone!"

"Not the book?" cried Thirteen-fourteenths.

"Don't say the book is lost again," said Lucy. "What shall we do? It seems to be bewitched."

"I always thought it was," said Minora. "I always said it was."

"I must say I hope it is lost," whispered Tare to Tret.

Father William sat down on the ground, and sobbed aloud.

"I went back to Nonsense Land," he groaned, "and I found them all at the Grand Panjandrum's Court. They had the book, the Grand Panjandrum himself had the book when I first got there," and Father William burst out crying once more and could not get any further.

Lucy felt the tears rolling down her cheeks, and, indeed, every one of them felt sorry to see the poor old man in such trouble.

Half-term went to him and held out both hands.

"I say," he said, "you cheer up; it'll all come right in the end. That book seems to be always getting lost, but it always turns up again, and I believe it will turn up this time. Let me help you up, don't sit there, sit under the tree."

Father William stopped crying, and let Half-term help him up.

"Look, there's an old bag full of something, sit on that," said Half-term.

Father William gave a loud shout, and, instead of sitting on the bag, picked it up, hugged it tightly in his arms, and began jumping up and down.

"Dear me, what a queer old gentleman," said Ellessdee.

"He always was queer," whispered Minora.

"What is it, Father William?" asked Lucy, "do you know what is in the bag?"

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

"Know what is in the bag?" cried Father William. "Why, of course I do, didn't I pack that bag my own self? Sit down, all of you, and listen. I will sit down on the bag. I won't lose it again."

So they all sat down beneath the tree, and Father William began—

"Question one—Where did the bag come from? Question two—Where did it go to? Question three—What is in the bag?"

"We haven't any paper," objected Ellessdee, "we can't take the questions down."

"Question one," said Father William, "I'll answer myself. Can anyone answer Question two?"

"I can answer one of the questions," said the Fraction. "I saw the holiday fairies dragging that bag through the wood."

"The young monkeys," said Father William, "then they stole it whilst I was asleep."

"The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood," cried a mocking voice up in the tree.

"Would you say 'stole' it?" asked another voice.

"Scarcely, perhaps," said a third voice.

And, looking up, they saw the three mischief-making, mischief-loving fairies up in the tree above their heads.

"Come down," said Father William.

"Come down," called Thirteen-fourteenths.

"Thanks awfully," said Summer, "but I think——"

"So do I," said Christmas.

"We'll stay where we are," said Easter.

"We're up a tree this time," they cried in chorus.

"Take no notice of them, Father William," said Lucy. "You'll go to sleep if you do. They always make me feel sleepy. Tell us about the book."

"To begin at the beginning of all things," said Father William, "in my youth——"

A large branch tumbled bang on his head.

"Oh, yes, dear me, yes," he said quickly. "As I was saying, I



“BEGAN JUMPING UP AND DOWN” (p. 123)

THE END OF THE BOOK

found them all looking at the book at the Grand Panjandrum's Court, and they said it was a grand book, such splendid nonsense ! ”

“ So it was,” said Minora.

“ So they all wanted it,” said Father William, fortunately not noticing the interruption, “ and they wanted it so badly that they even snatched it away from the Grand Panjandrum. Then first one snatched it, then another pulled it, and very soon the Book of Betty Barber was all in little bits.”

“ Torn into bits,” said Lucy, clapping her hands. “ Now, Thirteen-fourteenths, are you happy at last ? ”

“ Where are the bits ? ” said Ellessdee. “ We must fit them together and put those sums right.”

“ You see,” said Thirteen-fourteenths, “ Ellessdee would put the bits together again. Where are the bits, Father William ? ”

Father William smiled his own peculiar smile, “ The bits of the Book of Betty Barber, my dear young friends, are here. Here, in this sack. I picked them up and packed them in myself.”

“ Give them to us,” cried the Fraction.

“ Give them to us,” shouted Ellessdee.

“ Give them to us,” said Miss Crimson Lake.

“ One moment,” said Father William, “ I packed the bits in this bag, and I was so tired I closed my eyes for a few moments, then the monkeys up the tree stole the bag, and I thought it was lost.”

“ We know all that, we know all that,” cried Ellessdee, “ give us the bits, we must get those sums right.”

“ Of course we must,” cried Sois.

“ You shan't do anything of the kind,” cried Minora. “ I will carry the bag as it is to Queen Harmony. Look, I have one page,” and she held out the page which she had taken from Father William.

“ Have you one page ? ” cried Ellessdee, snatching it away.

And then they all began quarrelling and fighting, snatching, and pushing. They pulled Father William off the bag, and he only stared at them wondering ; then, whilst Ellessdee, Sois, and Minora

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

were fighting over the one page, all the others pulled the bag first one way, then the other, each trying to get at the string to untie it. The holiday fairies sat up in the tree and laughed.

When the bag began to come to pieces, and the bits of paper began to fall out, they laughed louder than ever.

But Lucy, who had spent most of her time watching the struggle, pushed her way into the middle of the group, and called out loudly :

"Stop, stop. We ought to be ashamed of ourselves."

"We ought," said Thirteen-fourteenths.

And the figures hung their heads, Minora covered her face with her hands, and the others stood still thinking.

"It isn't your fault," said Easter.

"It's Betty Barber's," cried Summer.

"Listen to me for one moment," said Lucy, as she picked Father William up from the ground.

"I always said it was a popular work," he said, as he leant back against the tree, and prepared to go to sleep once more.

"Ellessdee, Thirteen-fourteenths, Minora, all of you," said Lucy. "This book must be destroyed, it causes nothing but mischief."

"Excuse me interrupting you," said Half-term, "but to which book do you refer? It appears to me that there is no book."

And, indeed, Half-term was right. There was no book, and the bits of it were scattered all over the ground, most of them so trampled on and dirty that they did not look like bits of paper.

"We couldn't put the bits together again," said Ellessdee.

"Queen Harmony won't want to see those dirty little pieces of paper," said Minora.

"Let us pick up all the pieces we can find, and bury them," said the Fraction.

"No, your first plan was a good one," said Lucy. "Let each pick up as many pieces as possible, carry them to the top of a tree, and scatter them to the winds."

"If you want the place swept up," said Christmas, "why, of course."



"THEY JOINED HANDS."

THE END OF THE BOOK

"Of course," said Easter.

"One moment," said Summer.

And the three fairies swung themselves down from the tree and hurried away.

"Where are they off to, this time?" said the Fraction. "They only mean mischief, let us all set to work to pick up the bits before the fairies come back."

And all the figures, Lucy, Minora, and Miss Crimson Lake set to work with a will.

"I think," said Half-term, sitting down, for once, "you are wasting your time. My charming sisters have gone to fetch a friend, who will do the work much better. Ah, I thought so. Here he comes. If you will take my advice, you will all lie flat on your faces."

Father William lay down, but the others took no notice.

Then, suddenly, the pieces of paper began to run along the ground.

"A wind getting up," said Thirteen-fourteenths.

But as he spoke the wind grew stronger and stronger. The trees tossed their branches, showers of twigs and leaves tumbled to the ground, the wind howled and whistled; but through all the noise the shouting and laughing of the three sisters could be heard.

Lucy, Minora, and all the others were glad to take Half-term's advice, and lie flat on the ground.

"What a wind!" whispered Thirteen-fourteenths.

"It is going away," whispered Lucy.

And, as suddenly as it had risen, the wind died away.

"It's all right, he's gone," cried Half-term.

And one after another Lucy, the Fraction, Minora, and the others raised their heads, and looked about them.

"What's that?" cried Ellessdee, pointing to something black and white lying on the ground beneath a tree.

"I believe it's the piece of my jacket," said Thirteen-fourteenths.

"The wind has blown it down."

THE BOOK OF BETTY BARBER

He ran quickly to pick it up, and shouted, "Hurrah ! Hurrah ! Hurrah !"

And Ellessdee, Tare and Tret, Repeater, and Sois shouted, "Hurrah !" too.

"Then let us be off to Sum Land," said Ellessdee.

"You certainly can't pick up the pieces of the book," said Lucy, "there's not a bit to be seen anywhere. We ought to thank the holiday fairies."

"And I ought to thank them," said Thirteen-fourteenths, "their friend has found the piece of my jacket. Where are they?"

"You won't see them any more at present," said Half-term, "when Mr. Wind is out with three Holidays, they all have a good time and enjoy themselves."

"Then let us go to Sum Land," said Thirteen-fourteenths, "and I'll try always to remember that holidays are good for something."

"I'll go back to Music Land," said Minora, "and tell Queen Harmony there is no Book of Betty Barber."

"Before we separate," said Lucy, "let us all join hands in a circle round the tree, and say together, 'The Book of Betty Barber is gone. Hurrah ! Hurrah ! Hurrah !'"

And they joined hands, and cheered heartily, then they clapped hands ; and then they all jumped and ran, shouting and singing, down the path to the cross-roads, each to find his or her own way home.

As they disappeared through the wood there was a fluttering among the branches of the tree, and the White Owl flew down the trunk to her old quarters.

"Hurrah ! Hurrah ! Hurrah !" she said, as she settled herself comfortably. "I shall have peace at last, the Book of Betty Barber is gone—gone—gone ! Hurrah ! Hurrah ! Hurrah !"

Printed by
BALLANTYNE & CO. LIMITED
Tavistock Street, Covent Garden, London



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00009790925

